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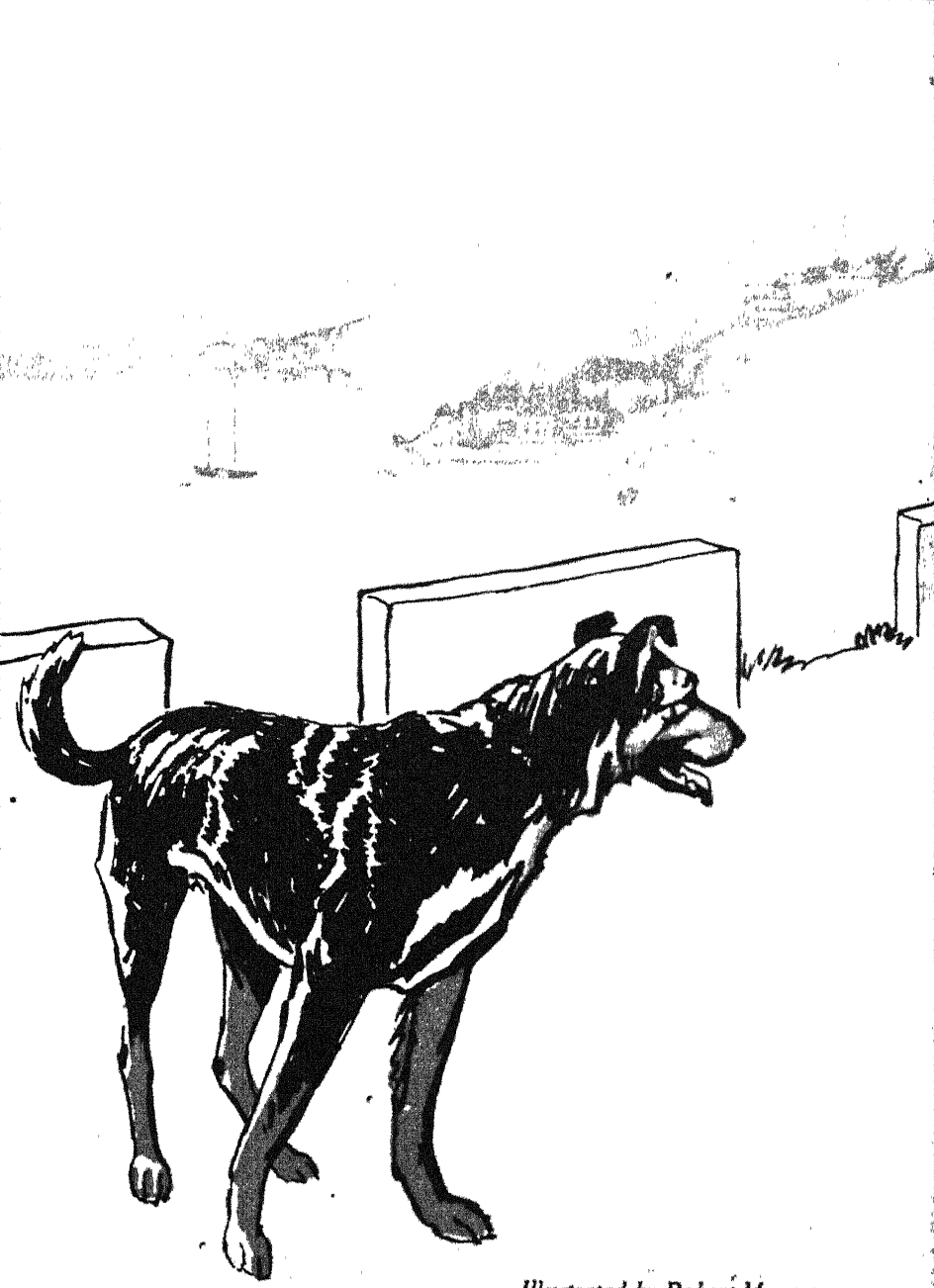
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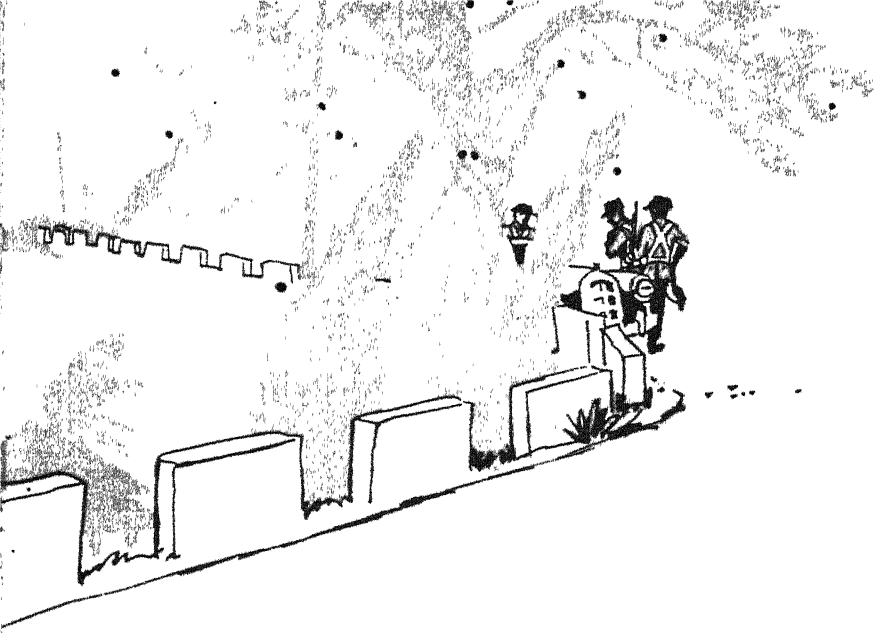
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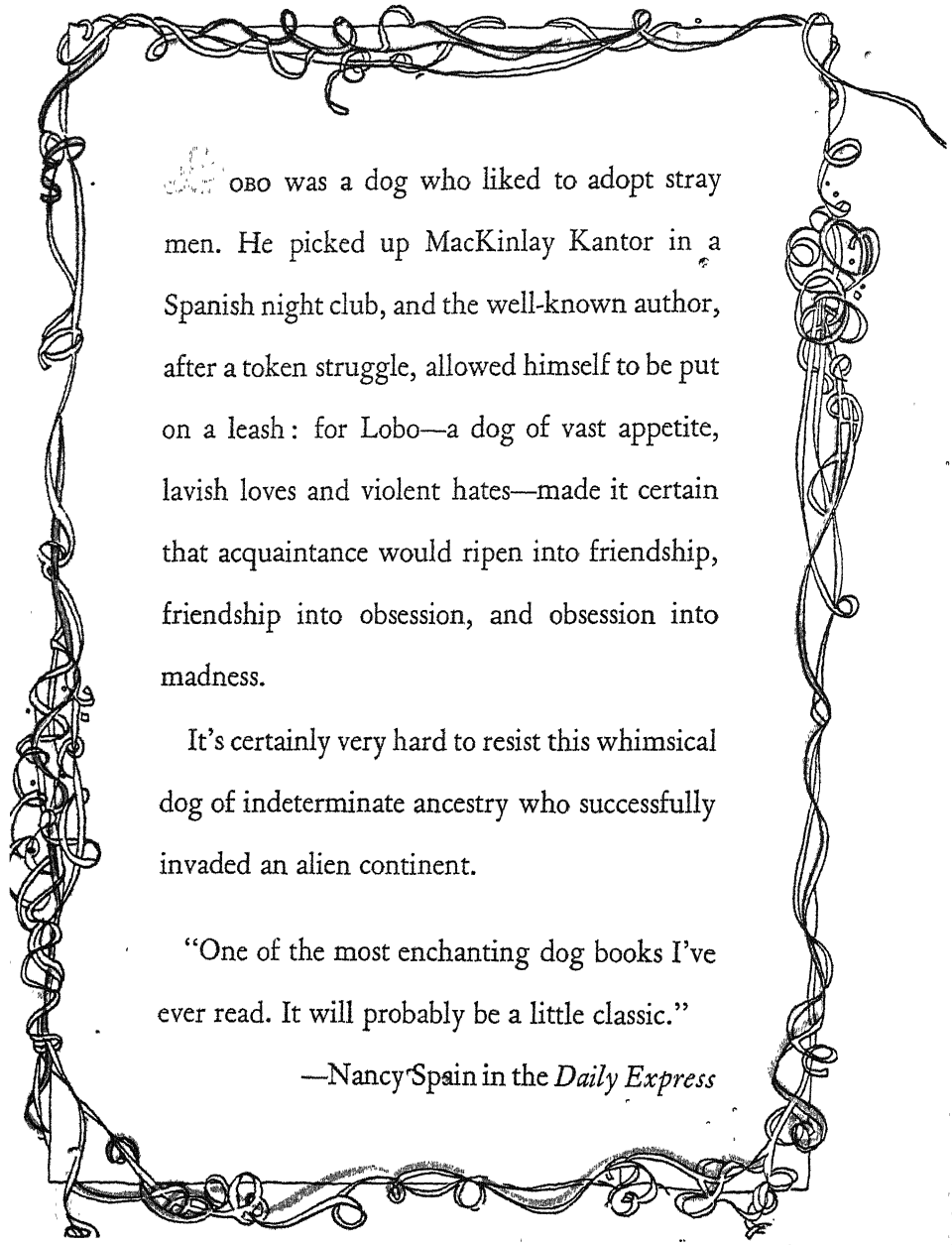


LOBO

A condensation of the book by

MACKINLAY KANTOR

"Lobo" is published by W. H. Allen, London

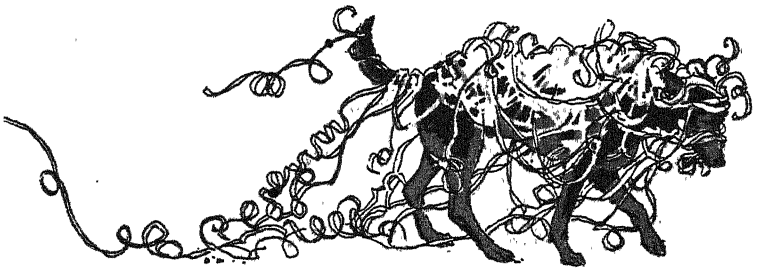


Lobo was a dog who liked to adopt stray men. He picked up MacKinlay Kantor in a Spanish night club, and the well-known author, after a token struggle, allowed himself to be put on a leash: for Lobo—a dog of vast appetite, lavish loves and violent hates—made it certain that acquaintance would ripen into friendship, friendship into obsession, and obsession into madness.

It's certainly very hard to resist this whimsical dog of indeterminate ancestry who successfully invaded an alien continent.

"One of the most enchanting dog books I've ever read. It will probably be a little classic."

—Nancy Spain in the *Daily Express*



WHEN FIRST we encountered him, he was disguised as a *fiesta*. If I ever did know what Spanish historical occasion is celebrated on the night of February 15th, I have forgotten. It was on such a night.

The establishment which Lobo had decided to grace with his presence is known as the Montemar-El Remo. The Montemar part is a sprawling white plaster hotel, on the shoulder of a hill, with the Mediterranean turning choicely blue or bitterly grey a quarter of a mile beneath. Down on the shore is El Remo, a busy little restaurant by day, and by night a club where the light fantastic is tripped by individuals of the Gay International Set. Its cuisine, presided over by one Cristóbal, is above reproach, if some of the guests occasionally aren't. Grouped near El Remo are cottages and a row of modern glass-fronted apartments, all a part of the same brave social scheme.

This unique enterprise is directed by the Marqués de Nájera, a famous cavalry officer of the Rif campaign. Angel, as he is called by intimates, is seconded in command by the lovely María Luisa Rein.

A *fiesta* was in progress at El Remo that evening, and what with paper streamers and confetti and noisemakers and champagne, everything was moving well at two a.m.

I am by nature an abstemious man, but my senses shivered as I watched a portion of the carnival scenery detach itself and move calmly towards us.

I murmured to my wife, "Do you see what I see?"

Irene said limply, "I guess we ought to go home."

"Let's go—I'm with you. Streamers don't just get up and walk about."

That is what these streamers were doing. A huge mound of gaily coloured paper progressed ominously across the dance floor.

"It's got a tail," Irene observed. Sure enough, the paper mountain did have a tail, a sickle-shaped appendage with a white tip.

Cristóbal approached our table.

"Please, what is *that?*" We indicated the ambulatory hummock which had now turned majestically on another course.

"Ah, that. That is Lobo."

Thus began an acquaintance which ripened into friendship, which in turn ripened into obsession, which in turn ripened into madness. In the direction of Lobo (Spanish for wolf) lay madness.

If you chose to introduce a Dobermann, an Alsatian wolf-dog and an old mongrel and have them somehow intermingle and beget, they might have produced something like Lobo. He had yellow eyes, and his slim legs and tiny feet were fawn-coloured. In a land where the wearing of masks is a felony, he wore a tan mask across his face. He had a white neck-tie; from this formal decoration a pale zipper extended under his belly.

Lobo weighed fifty pounds on the dot. He could run about twice as fast as any greyhound at the Sarasota Kennel Club. His teeth had been hand-forged in Seville by some master swordsmith; his tongue was a slice of palest *Serrano* ham; most of his body had been well blacked and rubbed by the best *limpiabotas* in Spain. (That is foreign talk for bootblack.)

According to Angel and María Luisa, Lobo's mother belonged to a shepherd in the hills behind the Montemar. One cold day this unhappy country matron presented the shepherd with a litter of puppies. The Spaniards are a philosophical race—but also practical. The practical shepherd, rather than feed them, turned the puppies out to die. I suppose that most of them did die. Perhaps up there amid the flint and boulders of the coastal range are lying the long-picked bones of Lobo's kin. No bones of Lobo are there.

Lobo betook himself shoreward. I can understand how his reasoning went, and so can anyone else who knew him. "Let's see," Lobo meditated. "Shelter, of course. Food . . . yes, yes, but not ordinary food.

Companionship? For a certainty. And I do like a place with an open fire and red leather cushions."

So he showed up at the most expensive café on the southern coast of Spain, and moved in as manager.

How long since all this had taken place?

Time means very little to the Spanish.

You would say, "How long has Lobo been here?"

"Oh, for years."

"How many years?"

"Oh, for some years, *Señor.*"

"Well, two years, three years?"

"Oh, yes."

"Four years, five years?"

The shrug. "Perhaps."

"Six years?"

"I don't know, *Señor.* He has been here for years."

Actually he had a few grey hairs when we first knew him. But a vet who looked at his teeth later said they were the teeth of a young dog.... His age, then? *No lo sé, Señor.*

In any case, Lobo was an individual of serious purpose, definitely community-minded. He was known in every shop. All children, gardeners and maids knew him. The Civil Guards—the local police—treated him with respect. "Good morning, Lobo," they would say. He would bow, and continue on his course, which usually had something to eat at the end of it.

Most of the *turistas* who came to El Remo thought naturally that this beast belonged to Cristóbal or someone else of the staff. At times the staff thought he belonged to the Devil. Yet he was not in those days a cross dog. Neither was he a dirty dog, nor a smelly dog; he did not jump up on the tables. Still, the mere ubiquity of the creature was something to be contended with.

His comfort was eminently well provided for at the café; the huge golden eyes did the trick. He was catholic as to his tastes. Often we saw him leisurely munching chicken bones contributed by some tot. He ate every variety of hors d'oeuvre in the place, although he was most partial to caviar.

His procedure was to approach a table and put his stony head on a

knee or a lap. When you looked down to see what this weight was that you were bearing, the weight was Lobo. You fed him, you had to, you couldn't *not* feed Lobo.

This is not champagne or brandy-talk, Spanish or otherwise; but it does seem that I have seen him eat twice his weight in anchovy olives, cold sausage, almonds, tuna fish, white bread, omelette, pickled shrimp, candied cherries and vegetable soup in a single evening. When even *his* rubber belly could hold no more, he would saunter towards a red leather cushion on the built-in bench near the fire-place. If some interloper happened to be there, he would fling himself across the interloper's feet as a hint that the spot should be vacated.

Generally he was very even-tempered—in those days. From time to time he travelled with a troop of native dogs ambling about the neighbourhood; he seemed to rule them by influence rather than by brawn. I never saw him in but one fight, and then it was with a snobbish French poodle who swished into the place and apparently whispered some slighting reference to Lobo's ancestry. Having by that time a working knowledge of Lobo, I managed to save the visiting poodle from complete dismemberment.

"How *dare* you!" the poodle's mistress was shrieking. "How dare you retain such a wicked beast?"

"Madam," I said, "he is not my dog." Suddenly my heart was a little heavy at the thought that this was true.

If Lobo had no human family of his own it was not his fault. He wanted a family, he courted families. Did the mighty General Carlos Martínez Amadeo Silva y Serrano appear for a seaside holiday complete with *la señora,* nine children and eleven maids? Lobo moved in with them.

Invariably he was welcomed as a combination court-jester, tutor and night watchman. But a fortnight later the Silva tribe would return to Madrid minus Lobo.

The following week the cottage might be occupied by an elderly countess, with whom Lobo would promptly effect a liaison. Next month it might be an ailing English couple, or an American painter, a French opera singer, a Copenhagen merchant.

Thus Lobo developed his allergy to suit-cases. He dissolved at the mere sight of a suit-case being dragged from its lair. His reaction was to



depart into the nearest dark cupboard and lie with his face turned against his tail. When a departure grew imminent, he would not come out and say good-bye. He would simply congeal until the chambermaids, the *camareras,* shovelled him out of the way when they came to prepare for new tenants.

Later, when Lobo's life was identified with my own, other people used to come proudly and declare that they too had dwelt in such intimacy. "You know, Lobo lived with *us* once. For three weeks." They seemed confident of securing prestige by the statement.

THE NIGHT we returned to Spain for our second period of residence, in the early spring of 1954, we entered El Remo for dinner. Lobo greeted us with open paws. We had planned to take a house a little farther down the coast. Meanwhile, Angel arranged temporary quarters for us in an apartment on the shore; without invitation, Lobo accompanied us there after dinner.

I do not think Lobo knew the place, but when he trotted into the apartment he exuded an air of having been there before. Carefully he selected the best portion of the upholstered couch, curled up, winked at us, went to sleep. He was still there in the morning, motionless, and did not even deign to stretch—until breakfast was brought and there was some reason for getting up. He took his usual Continental breakfast of buttered roll and marmalade, then asked me to open the door for him. He disappeared. We did not see him again until ten o'clock that night, when the very earliest-dining Spaniards begin to gather. Then he consumed dinner with us, and moved in again for the night.

On the third day we were invited to a party. It was to be a large assemblage, and common sense suggested that we should decline. The

hostess was a member of the Gay International Set and there were bound to be the usual Hollywood types, Left Bank types, Monaco types, with a good prospect of several people plunging fully clad into the swimming-pool before the night was over.

Few diners were present when we walked into El Remo about ten, and there was no Lobo in sight. "Where is Lobo?" I asked.

"*Don* MacKinlay, he has gone to the party. Were you not invited to the party? Everyone has gone to the party."

We said something about being weary from our trip.

"Oh, yes," said Cristóbal. "I know that Lobo is there, because he saw them fetching in the food very early, and preparing tables in the *contessa's* patio. He went up there immediately."

That night Lobo cast discretion to the winds; he became one of the Gay International Set. It was four a.m., and we were sound asleep, when the most horrible caterwauling burst forth outside our door, punctuated by a scratching assault on the panel. I opened the door. Lobo staggered in. He had had too much to drink as well as too much to eat. He barely made it to the couch, and didn't get up until noon.

WE STARTED explaining suit-cases to Lobo a couple of days later.

"You see, Lobo, we have taken a house about five *kilómetros* down the beach, and of course that is too far from El Remo for your comfort. So——"

But we were talking to thin air, because he had gone into the cupboard. There was just that shiny black rear with its four-leaf-clover design of tan at a strategic place; that was all we could see. He didn't move, not even after we crowded our bags into the car. Irene bent over him tenderly. "Lobo, aren't you even going to say good-bye?"

He did follow us into the yard, but after one look at the loaded car he lay down and turned his face away.

"I almost hate to leave him," Irene mourned as we drove off.

"Why, he wouldn't be happy anywhere else. El Remo is his *home.*" And I had almost convinced myself of this by the time we reached our new quarters at La Verdad.

After a few meals there cooked over charcoal, we felt that since we were the proud possessors of a regular stove we would try a little roasting or baking. Now, most Spanish stoves would be good for fogging up an

Air Force Base to conceal it from the enemy; ours was no exception. A storm of smoke drove us out. We left the windows open and fled back to El Remo.

Promptly a solid head was dumped on each of our knees in turn, and Lobo expressed his pleasure by gobbling most of our dinners. Then he disappeared; we presumed that he had gone among other tables to beg for further sustenance—as if he needed it!—and after a while we went out to our car.

Lobo was there—in the driver's seat.

I shoved him over between us. "Let's take him home for a visit. Might be fun."

"Now, don't you start that," said Irene.

"Oh, what's the harm? He can visit us for a couple of days, and then we'll bring him back and dump him down here the next time we come. He'd much rather be *here* than *there*. Anyone knows that."

Anyone didn't know that. I was soon rather sick of having him under foot all the time, and I was busy working on my novel, *Andersonville,* and I didn't see how he could help me very much. Accordingly we came back to El Remo a few nights later for a Sunday-evening snack; once we had seen him retreat towards the patio to join the dancers and diners there, we tiptoed quietly to the car and drove away.

All Lobo did was to go up to the big coastal highway which bisects the hillside between El Remo and the Montemar Hotel. He lay beside the road for two days and two nights. The *Guardia Civil* told me so later, for they saw him and wondered about it.

The third day, we started to drive to Málaga. Our car more or less stood out in that land of few motor-cars, most of them of darker hue: we were driving a saloon with a cream-coloured body and rust-coloured top; it could be spotted far away.

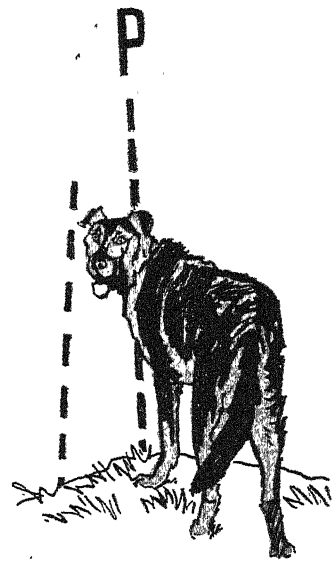
As we whirred past the intesection by El Remo I saw a shape beside the road.

"Is that Lobo back there?"

Irene turned for a look. "It is indeed Lobo back there. He is coming at exactly ninety miles per hour."

There were some trucks about, there was a flock of sheep to be circled. I didn't want to see Lobo mashed before our very eyes, so I hastily pulled over to the side of the road and slowed down. He overtook the car like

track star John Landy passing somebody in a wheel-chair. He took off in a running leap when he was about fifteen feet away. Fortunately the window by the driver's seat was open, because that was his target.



When a fifty-pound plummet of solid dog lands smack on your stomach and chest, you know that you have been hit. We went groaning to Málaga, where I bought Lobo a fine red collar and a leash. He had never worn a collar; I thought the red would be gay. He had never been on a leash either, as far as we knew; but delicately he trod the crowded pavements, overseeing our shopping, as if he had half a dozen diplomas from obedience schools. There was nothing to do but to take him back to La Verdad, where he'd remain in residence with us until our departure.

There was an interlude when he visited the local veterinary surgeon in Torremolinos. We had promised to move over to Mallorca for some sixteen days and we just couldn't imagine lugging Lobo to Madrid and thence by air to the Balearic Islands.

I left Lobo in the car outside the vet's, while I went in to explain. A poor dog, I said—a beggar dog who has adopted us temporarily. . . . He needs to be wormed, bathed, etc. . . .

El veterinario listened sympathetically and suggested that I should bring the dog inside. When we appeared, his eyes widened with delight.

"Why!" he said. "I thought you said this was a *poor* dog—an unknown! Why, this is *El Lobo!*"

Lobo brooded a good deal while we were gone, the vet said. He was *muy desconsolado*. He awarded us a flattering reception on our return.

We soon found that Lobo was given to mysterious illnesses. He had a couple of them that summer—times when he would lie in a chair or on the floor for several days, and would neither eat nor drink. Once I took

him up to the vet's; he only shook his head and gave Lobo a *laxante*. The animal perked out of it in a couple of days, and went bounding about the cliffs again.

During this season Lobo began to realize that he had become a man of substance. His disposition underwent a slight if corrosive change. For the first time he growled at the Civil Guard.

In Spain, quite sensibly, many of the guards dwell in family barracks, complete with wives and children. One of these establishments was directly across the road from our place at La Verdad, and it was customary for the guards, who had to report for duty at the central office in Torremolinos, to wait outside our gateway until I drove towards the village on morning errands. Sometimes there was one man, sometimes two or three, all very handsome in neat green uniforms, with Tommy guns slung amiably over their shoulders and black hats shining. It became Standing Operating Procedure for them to wait there, and Standing Operating Procedure for me to stop, ask if they would like a lift, and fling open the door. The first time I did this, Lobo nearly flung himself out of it. He had decided that the car was his, and he saw no reason why the *polícia* should take over. I counselled him severely and he remained quiet, but a rumbling growl moved in the caverns of his body as the trim military figures climbed into the back seat.

"Why, here is *El Lobo,*" they said. "Lobo, how are you today?"

Grrrrr.

They forgave him the slight; probably they thought it was quite natural. One guard said, "Lobo is now very rich."

I told him firmly, "Lobo is not rich. He is the same dog he always was."

"*Señor,* he is rich by comparison. You see, Lobo had nothing before; now he has a beautiful home, and a handsome large American car. Yes," he said contentedly, "Lobo is rich. *Es verdad.*"

Grrrrr, said Lobo.

TOWARDS the end of our stay we began to hear rumours. "Is it true? Are you taking Lobo back to the United States when you return?"

"Nothing could be further from the truth."

"You should take him. He loves to be with you."

We felt that it would take more than a mere preference on Lobo's part

to compel us to submit to such an ordeal. It would be an ordeal for him also, for we planned to drive to Madrid, thence through the Pyrenees and all the way up through France; then we would leave the car at a seaport while we went—by boat, air and train—to look after some business in England, Denmark, Germany.

"You think that would be a kindness to the dog?" I demanded witheringly of these self-appointed advisers. "Why, the poor thing would have to be shut up in a kennel, week after week."

I had made a few tentative inquiries, and had even secretly consulted the regulations at the consulate in Málaga. Not much of a trick to get him into the United States, if we really wanted to do so. All he had to have was a rabies certificate, and a deposition of good health signed by a vet shortly before embarkation. Then, if he stood up under the scrutiny of the Public Health Officer in New York (and didn't take a piece out of him) he could be admitted at once. It was entirely discretionary with the officer. France, too, he could get into: no trouble about that. But in England, dogs must be quarantined for six months. No exceptions. "Just think of Lobo, accustomed to bounding about the cliffs, scampering along the shore. Think of his languishing in a French kennel! It's too hideous to contemplate. We certainly shall *not* take Lobo. Anyway, he is very happy at El Remo."

Men and women propose, Lobos dispose.

Community opinion seemed to be divided. Some people said we were right—imprisonment would be sheer cruelty. Others said, wasn't it terrible for those Kantors to go away and abandon their dog?

Our dog, indeed. I scowled at Lobo and felt almost that he deserved to be abandoned. One late summer evening I said to Irene, "I thought I'd go by El Remo and say good-bye to the staff. We've got dates every night until we leave, so we shan't be going back there for dinner. This is as good a night as any to leave Lobo. Pack your bags, Lobo." Which feat Lobo performed by bounding into the car and sitting up expectantly.

Irene reached in, put her arms round him, hugged and petted him, and then went quickly down the steps towards our house, because she wanted neither Lobo nor me to see her cry.

At El Remo the season was in full swing, the car park filled with little cars. There was a uniformed boy outside the door, another cheerful greeter inside.

Lobo made his usual recognition grunts. These were a series of piglike sounds which meant, "Oh, yes, we're back *here*. I know this place. Yes, yes. Well, well." I used to ask him whether he thought he was dog or pig; but he would only give me a lop-sided glance and keep on grunting.

Lobo set a course for the patio where people were still dining. I found the Marqués de Nájera at the bar and told him I was returning Lobo.

"A very good idea," said the *marqués*. "He might cry for a day or two after you depart, but he will be much happier here than in a kennel."

I believe he recognized desperation in my attitude. We lingered for a time at the bar. I tried to convince the *marqués*, the *marqués* tried to convince me, I tried to convince myself, that a clean break was best, that this thing was right.

Cristóbal came by then. I took him aside and folded into his palm not exactly a king's ransom in *pesetas*, but at least a duke's. "Lobo must lack for nothing this winter," I said.

"*Don* MacKinlay, Lobo has never lacked for anything."

"Nevertheless, he might get ill and need to go to the vet. He might —Oh well, you will take good care of him, won't you?"

"We do not take care of Lobo," said Cristóbal with dignity. "Lobo takes care of us."

I peered out on the pretty little lawn below the orchestra's platform. All the regular Saturday-night celebrants were gathered. I saw María Luisa, her dark eyes flashing as she danced; I saw the lawyer I knew from Málaga, the film director from Barcelona.

Also I saw a black tail with a white tip, a tail shaped like a sickle, moving casually among the farther tables. I turned away.

The *marqués* and I shook hands, embraced, parted. Cristóbal and I shook hands, embraced, parted.

Well, I thought, you won't get anywhere this way. Come on, get moving. . . .

Quietly I went towards the door. The inner doorman sprang forward. There was a frown between his brows.

"*Señor*, where is Lobo?"

"Lobo," I said, "is among the tables in the patio, and there he will remain. Shhhh."

"Shhhh," repeated the inner doorman.

I descended the steps. The outer doorman, or doorboy (*Botones*, since

he wore numerous buttons on his uniform), came up, also frowning.

"But, *Señor,* have you not forgotten *El Lobo?"*

"I have not forgotten *El Lobo,"* I said. "I can never forget him. Shhhh."

"Shhhh," said *Botones.*

I went round through the dark drive, past innumerable little cars. The car park attendant came up through the gloom, his torch flashed.

"Ah, *Señor!* But where is the dog?"

"Shhhh," I said. "The dog is among the dancers and tables of food on the patio. Shhhh."

"Shhhh," said the car park attendant.

We moved upon my car through the darkness. The attendant flashed his torch . . . *and who should be waiting there?* A beautiful line from the poet Alfred Noyes. Noyes said it was Bess, the landlord's daughter, plaiting a dark red love-knot into her long black hair. . . . Who should be waiting there, indeed?

He had black hair but he was plaiting no love-knot into it. He stood, red collar ashine, amber eyes gleaming, tail swaying with assurance.

I unlocked the door and he swarmed into the interior. *"Hombre,"* I said huskily, "let's go to America."

WE WERE optimistic in assuming that because Lobo had been informed verbally of his projected adventure, he would shrug off his allergy to suit-cases. In fact he never did lose the allergy. Any object which looked as if it might be packed for a journey meant just one thing to Lobo: it meant that people were going to go away and leave him. The fear was too deeply rooted, it could not be changed. Sometimes I even caught him regarding my brief-case with gravest suspicion.

Felipe carried our bags up the steps to where I was struggling to force all our possessions into one saloon-car, while Irene peered into the depths of the cupboard, where Lobo had been monkishly entombed for the past forty-eight hours.

"Come along, Lobo."

Naturally we always addressed him in Spanish.

"You will accompany us in the car."

The creature bounced into a sitting position and regarded her, eyes rolling, jaws agape. She started to repeat the reassurance, when he gave

a dive past her, nearly upsetting her; he plunged through the patio and soared up the several flights of stairs. He emerged from the pink-geranium-smothered hill as if shot out of a cannon. In mid-trajectory, however, he halted, then flopped to the ground. He had seen all those suit-cases. This must mean the end after all. It was not until Irene herself had laboured up the steps, opened the car door and pointed that he really knew. Jet-propelled by the inexhaustible fuel of his desire, he annihilated gravity and space, and lay gasping atop the highest-piled wardrobe container on the back seat. There was just room for him between the layers of baggage and the roof.

Felipe and Anita came to say their *adiós* but Lobo heeded not. As we drove through the gate and down the highway, I could see him in the mirror, his face turned towards the back window, his ears sagging as he regarded the Andalucía he was leaving. He did not even growl at the *Guardia Civil* when they gave us a rifle salute in farewell.

Like all her sex, Irene had been tempted into a wonderful bargain: in this case, a pair of green shoes, burnished with nail-heads, which a local cobbler was fashioning for her at a price so ridiculously small that she would have insulted her femininity had she not yielded to the temptation. (The fact that she was never able to wear the shoes after she got them is beside the point.) Delivery had been promised for lo, these many weeks. She had reminded the cobbler forcefully that the shoes must be ready by this day: she herself would stop to pick them up.

So we drove into Torremolinos and parked in a narrow street which, though crowded and dirty, is dignified by the name of Generalissimo Franco. Then someone spied Lobo.

"You are about to depart," we were told shrilly. "But look—do you not see? Lobo is in the car."

"Yes, we know."

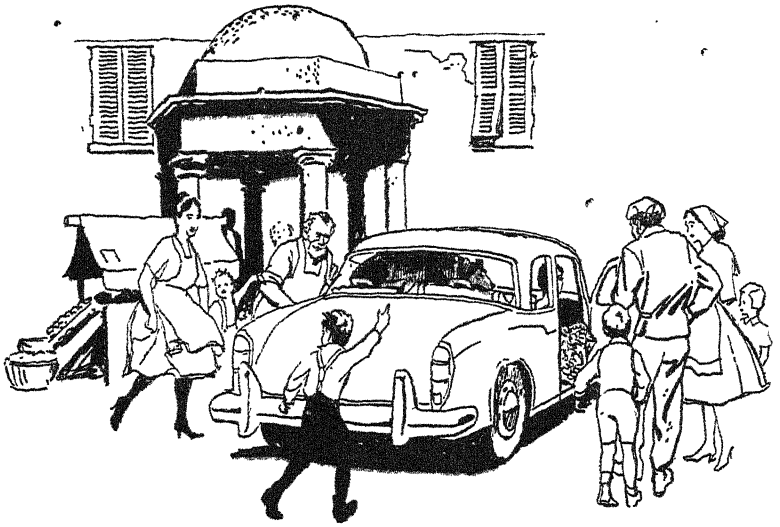
"But—Lobo?" The voices rose higher. "Do you mean to say——? Is it true? *Madre de Dios!* Is Lobo to accompany you?"

"It is true."

Yells arose on every side. People began to flock from the shops. "María! Pepe! Matilde! Observe! Lobo! In the car! Lobo is to travel in the *coche!* Lobo is going to other nations! . . . Is it true, *Señor?*"

"It is true."

Children pressed round us, adults squeezed behind them, mules came



to observe. Not one of them drew so much as a glance from Lobo, who lay collapsed, brassy eyes brooding.

"Pablo! Bepa! Lobo—in the car! He goes to *los Etados Unidos!*"

We were half-way to Jaén before Lobo emerged from his state of shock sufficiently to threaten two herdsmen who shambled past in the dusk when we had stopped for a bite to eat.

By Spanish custom or law there was nothing wrong in Lobo's sharing our meals. To my notion this is a more civilized attitude than that of certain states of our own country which prohibit the appearance of dogs in public restaurants. I should much prefer to enjoy my meal with certain dogs under the table than with certain people sitting opposite me. But little matter now. . . . No eyebrows were raised at Lobo in any hostelry as we drove through Spain and France.

The leash had become an essential in Lobo's travelling equipment, since to his mind all tables were meant to be begged at; and all kitchens to be explored. He accepted his restraint philosophically; and because we were more or less fed up with alien cookery (and longed for nothing so much as American Spanish rice, which is not at all like the Spanish

rice of Spain) Lobo was deeded larger portions of our own fare than had previously come his way.

I shall never forget the fabulous evening we spent in Roquefort, drawn there by the mysterious scent of the cheese caverns. We sat down in a famous restaurant for the evening meal. The baked Roquefort cheese in light pie-crust—I forget what they call it—was out of this world; and so the steak would have been, the first decent-looking steak I'd seen for many a month. (In Andalucía steaks are carved from the very bravest of bulls by means of electric saws and diamond drills.)

However, I am just as allergic to grilled garlic as Lobo was to cabin trunks. It was my own fault I had not told the waiter. I should have known that they would saturate my sirloin with minute insertions of garlic, drench it with a marinade of garlic, serve it in a garlic sauce. Muttering curses at my own stupidity, I set to work to carve the steak for you-guess-whom.

He was under the table, and put his head up between my knees with the scarf of cloth concealing his eyes and draping his tan mask like a monk's cowl. Promptly at intervals a pink cavern opened, a chunk of beef was dropped in; then, at the stated interval, the pink cavern re-opened. That steak was at least three inches thick, and proportionately wide. . . . Lobo seemed fretful when we took him for his evening walk. I think he thought he had had his *canapé* but when did the dinner begin?

His compulsion in the direction of food must have sprung from some nagging recollection of the sharp-ribbed puppy which was himself, trailing down harsh hillsides above the Mediterranean, and sniffing drearily into ditches which bore not a single morsel of garbage—all before his guardian angels conducted him to El Remo.

Thus Lobo ate his way up through central and western France towards the inevitable, if temporary, parting in Le Havre. There, in a hotel with bitter experience of American tourists trying vainly to house-train newly acquired poodles, he was relegated to the basement for one sorry night. Recognizing belatedly that it was too damp and uncomfortable for even a toughened veteran like Lobo, I had a bright idea, and bedded him down in the car itself, parked in front of the hotel.

Lobo was so entranced with his new lodgings that he refused to budge each morning, and had to be hauled out bodily. Our car, to Lobo, was the height of luxury and satisfaction. It represented us, it represented

his new life. Security was here, and he doted on security. He knew always that we would come to the car again. I saw that in the future it would be unnecessary to remove our baggage from it. In wildest flight of fancy I could not envision the bold prowler who might attempt to force one of those doors, when inside there existed an arsenal of gleaming teeth and a snarl which would have frightened *El Cid* himself.

The eve of our sailing for England arrived, and we felt that we were leaving our friend in good hands. We had found a genial veterinary surgeon who asserted that Lobo was too fine an animal to languish in one of the small pens adjacent to his city surgery. He explained that in cases like this he always took the dogs to his mother's place in the country. With light heart I accepted this plan, and Lobo, wagging and dancing, cavorted off with the kennel-keeper, confident that refreshments were about to be served at the back.

I returned to the hotel and found Irene had come back from shopping. She was grieved. "I didn't get to say good-bye to Lobo."

"Oh, Lobo's fine. The last I saw him the vet had him on a leash."

Irene considered for a time. "Just give him a couple of days," she said. "Lobo will have the vet on a leash."

WE DID not believe we were leaving Lobo marooned, since he had always shown a remarkable aptitude for languages. Andaluz was his native tongue, but he understood Castilian, and he could not have dwelt long in the polyglot El Remo surroundings without at least a smattering of German, Dutch and French, with a few Scandinavian words thrown in. I think also that he knew some Arabic; he looked as if he did.

Already he had given us a striking demonstration of his ability to absorb English. The month before, in Pau, we had endured a rainy afternoon during which all Irene, who paints, wanted to do was put a new canvas on a stretcher, and all Lobo wanted to do was sleep.

"I think," I called into the bedroom where Irene sat on the floor with a mouth full of tacks, "I think that this is a good afternoon for me to take the car down to the garage to be seen to. In fact, I think I'll go now."

I addressed my wife in Mid-western United States, which is our mutual native tongue. Now, mind you, Lobo was sound asleep on the bed; furthermore, neither of us could recall ever having addressed him in any language except Spanish. In a split second a black-and-tan

projectile was fired off the bed and exploded into the target area beside the front door. He stood quivering, bright-eyed, ears up, tail aloft.

We looked at each other helplessly.

"You'd better take him," said Irene. "Perhaps he can help you, when you have trouble with the garage people with your French."

We had not, therefore, expected anything other than what we found on our return after three or four weeks in London, Copenhagen and West Germany: Lobo was speaking French fluently. There was no doubt about it. Half an hour after our arrival in Le Havre the girl assistant brought him out to me at the rendezvous I had arranged by telegram. Lobo was busy in conversation with her. She was talking of the country house, of *Grand-mère,* of other dogs; and Lobo was obviously understanding every word she uttered.

We came together. I was assaulted with tongue and claws. I paid my bill and stumbled out. "Let's go right over to the garage," I said, hailing a taxi, "so we can get the car out, and you can have a decent place to sleep tonight."

Like the greater part of Le Havre, the garage area has been rebuilt from scratch since the Second World War, and this particular garage is a handsome edifice with ramps leading from floor to floor, and room for scores of cars on every story.

An old man took us up in a lift, I unsnapped Lobo's leash, and he raced up and down the aisles of silent parked vehicles.

He found the car quicker than I could have found it—far quicker than the old attendant. He was still squinting at the ticket and trying to decide in which row the car might be when Lobo notified us that the car had been found, with grunts amplified out of all natural proportion by the peculiar acoustics of the place. I unlocked the door, and Lobo flew on to the back seat. The attendant regarded him with something akin to fear, all the way down, as we poked round the short hairpin curves.

Two days later British soil, in the shape of the S.S. *Mauretania,* was treated to its most singular Spanish invasion since the unsuccessful attempt in 1588.

Apart from the vast masses of food he required, the chief difficulty we encountered with Lobo was clerical. Not long before we reached New

York, I received a message from the old baggage-master, who insisted that I must come to see him about my dog. Baggage-masters take care of the business of booking dogs aboard steamships. Mr. MacWilliams was a Scotsman with well-established ideas on filling in papers.

"I am sorry, sir," he said. "Your papers on your dog are no complete."

"But what's wrong?" We spread the papers out. "Look here: home address, date of shipment, certificate of good health, rabies certificate——"

His finger indicated one blank square. "You have no put down the *breed* of the dog. Now, will you please to give me the *breed?"*

I took a deep breath. Irene and I had discussed Lobo's possible lineage; we knew that he came from the Montemar region, and also that he was prone to worry.

"Very well," I said. "If the truth must be known, he is a Montemar Worrier."

The baggage-master gripped his pencil. "How do you spell it?" Letter by letter, I spelt it out. There is no doubt that Lobo was the first Montemar Worrier—and probably the last—ever to be admitted to the United States.

I was apprehensive about New York. What would happen? Would officials come aboard, would they stick things down Lobo's throat? I shuddered to think of what might occur if this came about.

"What do I do?" I asked, that last morning. "Do I wait in the lounge for the Public Health officials?"

"Just take him off with you," said Mr. MacWilliams. "If yon officials want to see you, they'll find you on the quay." So Lobo marched on clicking toe-nails down the gangway and became an immigrant.

As for the health officials, we saw not hide nor hair of them. The customs officer studied the item on our declaration: *One Lobo. Acquired through self-adoption in Spain. Intrinsic value: uncertain,* and then tried to strike up a conversation with Lobo in Gaelic.

I still have the papers. Maybe he was never officially admitted after all.

IT WASN'T until I walked Lobo through the streets of New York that I began to realize how like a carefully bred dog he looked. He was all of a pattern: his doe-coloured stockings all the same size, his tan mask well balanced. There was the set and feeling of a breed about him. It wasn't until quite some time afterwards, when—Lobo-less—Irene and I

ventured on back roads in the Basque country, that we came to know what he was in fact.

He was a Basque shepherd-dog. If we saw one we saw forty Lobos in the Basque country. We saw two or three that could have been his litter mates. How Lobo's father ever found his way down the long rugged Iberian peninsula to Mediterranean shores, I leave to be decided by canine specialists. In any case, when people kept coming up to me in the street in New York and asking what kind of dog he was, I always said that he was a Montemar Worrier, which satisfied in every case. One old lady informed me that indeed that's what he was—a Montemar Worrier—she remembered now; her sister used to have one.

Lobo and I left Irene surrounded by doting grandchildren in Westchester, and sought Florida quickly. This time Lobo could share the front seat with me; but now, on alien shores, he had a propensity for putting his head in my lap. This I regarded as a safety hazard. We had a few words and cuffs on the subject, and after that he behaved properly—thrusting his head out of the right window, and observing critically the Howard Johnson edifices along the New Jersey Turnpike.

In Maryland an interesting experience befell when, perforce, I decided



suddenly to stop by the wayside and take a stroll into a thicketed area. Lobo tumbled out with me, and went through the woodland like a runaway jeep, except that he made more noise about it. I discovered that his grunts were not all recognition grunts; they were also inquisitive grunts.

"Goodness sake, what is this? What are all these trees? These bushes? What are all these smells? Ah-ha, above all, the smells! What is this, anyway?"

The idea struck me full force. It is a strange experience to proceed into the mild forests of Maryland, with a dog of obvious maturity, and realize that the dog has never been in *woods* before.

There are no woods in the locality from which Lobo sprang. There are a few trees bordering gardens, a very few bordering the roads; there are olive groves, some tiny groves of poplars grown as a crop. Nothing more. The rest is rocks, wasteland, low tough herbage. No thickets, no bushes, no wild brakes.

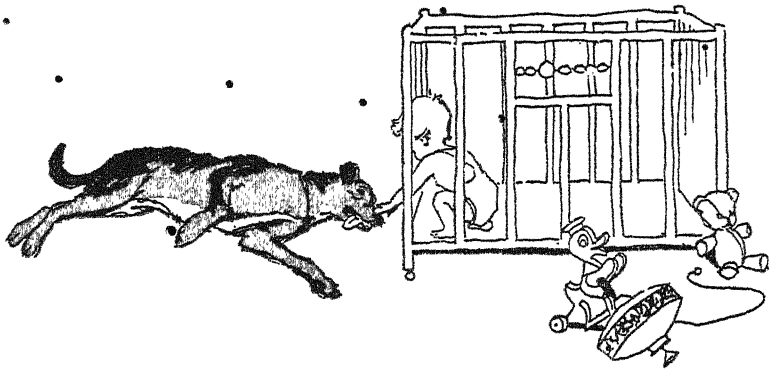
There was something touching about this. . . . I wondered how he would go plunging through the bit of Florida jungle which we own. (He went plunging, all right. He came home twice without his collar.)

Few bridegrooms ever lugged their brides across the threshold with more excitement than that with which I escorted Lobo to our beach on Siesta Key. His hard racing feet tore the white packed sand. . . . Birds, birds! He was after them full pelt. Of course I knew that he could never catch one; but he never learned the fact.

Coconuts were more vulnerable to his attack. A green coconut, shell and all, washed up on the beach, is a heavy thing. To Lobo they were peanuts. How he got his jaws round them I'll never know, but he did. In fact, I have seen him go off at full gallop with a coconut which weighed roughly a quarter of his own weight. Unfortunately coconuts were not the only objects against which he now directed his threats. The old parable of rags to riches had come true again.

In Spain a penniless beggar, Lobo had been tolerant as to disposition. He drew no property lines round El Remo or the Montemar. Let who would come and go, was his philosophy. Not so after he had acquired a seaside home in Florida, with a couple of cars thrown in. He was more avaricious than Hetty Green,* less charitable than Ebenezer Scrooge.

* *Ed:*—Hetty Green was at one time the richest woman in the United States



"Good grief!" he would roar at the top of his lungs, dashing across the living-room and out to the porch, slashing the rugs as he came. "Look out there on the beach! There's an old man walking on *my beach*. I can't *stand* this. He needs to be torn limb from limb! Open this door! I want to go down there and *assassinate* him!"

I thought of the discerning Civil Guard, far back in the Province of Málaga, who had observed, "Lobo is very rich now." In vain did I explain, cajole, set examples of hospitality and benevolence. Lobo was far gone into a most predatory sort of snobbery. If people didn't belong on his property, they didn't belong on it. That went for practically all humans.

As for dogs, he would pay ardent court to females who were in a courting mood; but—a *male* dog. . . . I was kept busy snatching at his collar, and explaining to the world that he was not truly vicious—he just had an exaggerated sense of property rights.

Our two small grandsons came with their parents to spend the Christmas holidays, and we watched Lobo narrowly. I heard him growl just once. He had an ear infection and Mike, the elder, pulled his sore ear. I explained to Mike, and he did not do this again. On the other hand, I came in one day to find the smaller boy in his play pen with Lobo lying just outside the wooden bars. Tommy had fastened his grubby mitts on Lobo's muzzle, and was kneading flesh and nostrils energetically. Lobo was not uttering a sound, nor trying to move away; he was just taking it from the baby.

We breathed more easily after that.

As IF to compensate for whatever inconvenience his high-handed defence of the home caused us, Lobo now offered other assistance. Heart and soul he became dedicated to helping me in my work.

In Spain he had paid but little heed: when I went out each day in the car with my portable typewriter, Lobo was content to remain at home, lying on cool tiles, watching Irene paint.

But *Andersonville* had grown from an originally promised one hundred and fifty thousand words into a projected three hundred and fifty thousand. There are such things as deadlines in the publishing business —mechanical details of manufacturing have to be set up in advance— and now they had to start putting the book into type long before I had finished it. I dared not let a day pass without a substantial amount accomplished, and sometimes I was very near the breaking point.

I began to find Lobo in the car each morning when I went to the garage. He sensed that I needed help and was willing to offer such as he could give. The house was unendurable as a workplace most of the time because of my vulnerability to interruptions. I had to drive afield, usually into the Myakka wilderness east of Sarasota, or to a lonely spot down the Tamiami Trail where I could not be reached or interfered with.

I took to fetching along Lobo's lunch as well as my own. He never interfered with my typing; I left the rear door open when parked in the shade, and Lobo could hop in and out as the spirit moved him. There was only one difficulty: for ever he was coming back hobbling from the effects of sandburs. I would have to extract myself from behind the typewriter and succour the needy—always rewarded by a slobbery tongue well applied.

There came a day when I thought I could work no more. I had been at it daily, without exception, for over fifteen months. My head ached, my eyes hurt. I was tired, tired. *You can't finish,* evil voices were crying. *You can't. Don't even try.*

I managed to back the car out of the garage that day, but couldn't turn it away towards the drive. Lobo was on the back seat. Over on the right-hand side of the front seat, the typewriter waited—grimly, implacably, presenting that threatening countenace which tyepwriters have for ever turned towards exhausted writers. I put my head back on the seat and was close to tears.

Then there came a heavy breathing in my ear. A nose was thrust close.

"Lobo, what shall I do?" My own voice sounded far away and flogged. "I can't go on. What shall I do—quit for a while? Try later, put the book off? What shall I do?"

With a single bound Lobo was on the front seat, sitting bolt upright behind the typewriter, staring ahead. Then he swung his head to the left, grinned, rolled his eyes.

"You mean that I've got to go to work anyway? That I've got to at least *try?*"

He bent down, put his head on the seat, pushed with his hind legs, stood on his head, and smashed over across my lap.

"O.K.," I groaned.

Away we drove. I wrote twenty-seven hundred words in the next two hours or so. They were pretty good words—or so at least some of the critics thought who quoted them later.

The Pulitzer Prize *Andersonville* won seemed a long way off in those days; so did the films, so did the critical response, so did the money which would be earned. But Lobo knew. Assuredly he knew.

IT WAS pretty tough on Irene, managing him when I was away. I had to go back to the Andersonville region several times; there was a research trip to Mississippi, and so on. During these periods Lobo appointed himself High Sheriff of Siesta Key, and lay most of the time either at Irene's feet or upon her bed. The mildest step of dry cleaner, spring-water man or casual caller was sufficient to bring him into a defensive attitude like that of the early Spanish women who tore out their hair to braid it for bow-strings.

Once Irene had flu while I was gone, and our friend and family doctor, Tom Garrett, came to attend her. Tom went out of that bedroom faster than he came in. This was not even reasonable, because Lobo knew Tom, and tolerated him socially. But I had gone, and he was *pro tem* guardian of bed, board and belfry. He had spent all his years trying to find a home and people of his own; now nothing in the world must interfere with his possession of them.

There was nothing sensible in his attitude, and I am not apologizing for him. No dog should behave in such wise. But I had come to the terrifying opinion that Lobo was not actually a dog.

I asked him about it one day when we were coming home from work.

"Is it true," I inquired in my most carefully constructed Spanish, which I fear isn't very carefully constructed, but was always understandable to Lobo, "is it true that you are not in fact a dog, but are actually a king of the Moors?"

He had the answer to that one too. He stood on his head, to show me that he was a veritable emperor of the Moors.

Did he ever dream of the whitewashed farm-houses, the noisy village streets, the mules, the creaking carts he had left thousands of miles behind? An echo was there one night for him to hear; he heard it and responded.

We were sitting in the living-room with friends, and Lobo was sound asleep on our bed at the other end of the house, flat on his back, all four paws dangling in the air. I knew this because I had seen him so a few minutes before. People were asking about the Holy Week processions in Spain, and we were trying to describe them: the jewelled images, the flare of ten thousand candles, the robed figures, the drums and bugles and weird Moorish pipes coming on ahead.

"Why," I said, "I have a recording made over there. A gipsy who is one of the finest *saeta* singers in Spain. Let me play it for you."

I put on the record. First there came the throb and shuffle of feet. You could imagine the heavy *paso* being lifted on to thirty or forty shoulders, the striving bodies, the ragged cord-soled sandals scraping uneven pavement stones. You could hear bugles beginning to talk, the pound of drums as fifteen-year-old musicians in their baggy khaki uniforms rolled and marched; and then *la niña* started in with her chant. Her voice was swept high, the traditional arrow of song above the sound of marchers.

Then another sound intermingled with this, and it did not come from the record-player. It was a series of grunts, approaching steadily up the long hall which led from our bedroom. *Unh, unh, unh, unh, unh?* Here he came, recognition sounds floating ahead.

Unh, unh, unh, unh?

He was in the middle of the living-room, ears lifted, body tensed, face turned towards the corner where the instrument lived. The gipsy's voice soared on; bugles blatted, drums throbbed.

Unh, unh, unh, unh? He went into the corner to stand close to the

amplifier, and he was still sniffing, but his nose told him nothing, *nada*. He was not back home in Spain. But . . . there was a memory, he had heard sounds . . . where did they come from? Because there was no actuality here. No smell. Only the sounds which he had learned in puppyhood. . . . Finally he collapsed, flopped on the floor, went to sleep, paid no more heed.

On that last morning, the eighth of August, I left him at the vet's in Scarsdale, New York. We were up there temporarily, to attend to the preliminaries of publishing *Andersonville*.

This was just a routine thing: he seemed to need worming again. But the vet. heard a suspicious cough, asked a few questions, and said he would like to make some tests. The next day we heard the verdict: heartworms, the parasites which dwell in sub-tropical regions, but now I hear are making their wicked way North.

"It won't be much," the vet said. "I'll start the series of shots straight away—he'll have to be here all this week."

He didn't want to be left there. Lobo said, "Please do not leave me. There is something I fear," and he twisted in circles at the end of his leash, and kept thrusting his head between my legs, and quivering. It hurts to remember that now. . . . They gave him the first shot that evening, and it killed him.

Nobody could understand why. The vet got another vet out of bed in the dead of night. They got chemists out of bed and talked to them about the serum. They even called the laboratory from which the serum had come. Nothing was wrong with it. But nothing could be done for Lobo.

Other vets must have cried in the past; but that was the first time I ever saw one do so.

Once I knew and loved a man who was notoriously stingy. He was often inconsiderate of others. Although he managed to make quite a lot of money, he never did little thoughtful things for other people, nor did he sacrifice himself too sublimely on community projects. Yet when he died the whole town wept. Everybody adored him, no one knew quite why. Everyone missed him; they miss him still.

Thus it was with Lobo. He was a gourmand; he set a high record for

selfishness; he was far too savage for comfort; he was always wanting to go in and out of doors just because he wanted to go in and out of doors. He was a thief: he stole a joint in New York, a steak in Sarasota, two pounds of minced beef at La Verdad. He lay on beds, he begged at table, he left a cloud of shed hairs wherever he moved. (Months after he left us, I was still picking black white-tipped hairs off the roof of one car—and how they ever got there is more than I know. I suppose it was when he stood on his head and waved his tail in the air.)

Lobo gave no alarms of fire. So far as I know, he never saved a child from drowning, or a traveller from freezing to death in the snow. He bit inoffensive Other Dogs. He lay right in the middle of all the main avenues, and you were for ever falling over him.

By ordinary standards of polite conduct, Lobo was a mess. Yet the majesty and mystery which he exuded reached far. People were mad for him, even the ones he growled at.

We took Lobo up to the Hartsdale Canine Cemetery and put him into the hillside. There he rests in the clutch of his adopted land.

Lobo. A strange and endearing form of Spanish Lend-Lease. Paws across the sea. . . . He has his stone—in Spanish, of course.

It says, *Adiós, Amigo.*





MacKinlay Kantor

MacKinlay Kantor was born in Webster City, Iowa, in 1904. He began to write seriously at the age of sixteen, and sold his first novel in 1928. Since then he has published thirty-one books, including histories, collections of short stories and many novels. He also wrote the original story for one of the most famous films of all time, *The Best Years of Our Lives* (which won thirteen Academy Awards). And *Andersonville,* the famous Pulitzer Prize-winning novel of the American Civil War. Mr. Kantor was a war correspondent in the Second World War, and was personally decorated by the Commanding General of the United States Air Force.

Mr. Kantor was married in 1926 to Irene Layne, an artist. They are the parents of a daughter and a son (the latter now a flyer in that same Air Force) and the grandparents of two small boys. The Kantors divide their time between Sarasota, Florida, and Spain.

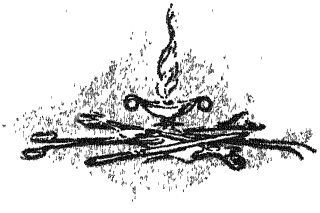
THE CENTURY OF THE SURGEON

Portraits and Illustration by Irwin Smith
Decorations by Robert Ball

THE CENTURY

of the

SURGEON



A condensation of the book by

JÜRGEN THORWALD

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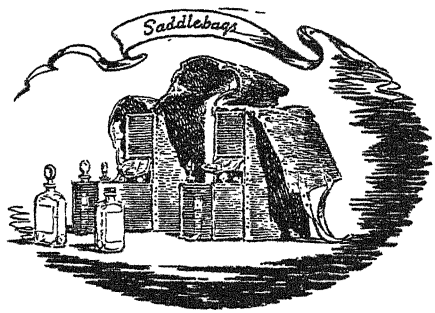
MODERN surgery began in 1846 with the first painless operation under ether. *The Century of the Surgeon* is the dramatic, factual story of the great medical pioneers who made history in the decades before and after this event: their courageous and troubled lives, and the new hope they brought to humanity.

To help the reader experience at first hand the excitement of those years, the author has created a fictional eyewitness, Dr. Henry Stevens Hartmann. On a pilgrimage over the road of surgical progress, Hartmann is led to observe and describe daring, unprecedented operations, to meet such giants of the age as Drs. Warren, Simpson, Lister and Koch.

This absorbing narrative reveals how in one man's lifetime, through genius and perseverance, surgery was transformed from a cruelly painful "last resort" into the great healing art that it is today.

"So full of wisdom, so full of tender humanity, so full of hope that it should be compulsory reading for everyone who thinks that he or she would have been better off in any other century than this." —*The Queen*

THE LONG NIGHT



EPHRAIM McDOWELL was the hero of my youth. I never saw him, since he died in 1830 when I was still a small child. But my father, who was an itinerant surgeon, had known him well, and told me about this mounted Kentucky doctor who made history.

Almost forty years before the discovery of anaesthesia and some sixty years before antisepsis, he had dared to oppose the prevalent professional opinion of his time. Operating on his living-room table, he had opened up the abdomen of a living human being, and his patient, a woman, had not died. She had been suffering from an enormous ovarian tumour, which at the time of his operation in 1809 was invariably fatal. The story was repeated to me often. I heard it first while my father held me on his knee, and I heard it again many years later when I resolved to be a surgeon myself.

McDowell's feat contributed a great deal to this decision; hearing it was, for me, to enter a world of intense excitement. In that dark age of surgery, it was a brilliant beacon which inspired my youthful imagination to glorious visions of the future. Later, however, when I myself was plunged into the midst of the century's tempestuous progress in surgery, McDowell's primitive operation became a symbol of that ancient era—

of the limited knowledge, the suffering and the cruelty, which by our own day was to seem almost inconceivable.

Almost as often as the story of McDowell, Father told me about the famous fistula operation upon King Louis XIV which had taken place in 1686. Fistulas—abnormal hollow passages in the body, generally caused by an abscess or injury—were my father's speciality. The story proved that a hundred and fifty years had produced virtually no progress in surgery. For my father operated upon fistulas exactly as the Frenchman Charles François Félix had operated upon his King: with a radical incision through all the tissues between the fistula, the gut and the anus.

Nevertheless, and this was the point my father had in mind, Félix's drastic but successful operation had a decisive influence upon the status of surgery. Since the Middle Ages the academic physicians had despised the barbers, "army surgeons" and so-called "bathers" to whom surgery was relegated. In fact, the very word *surgeon* means "manual worker." With the royal operation, however, surgery became respectable, and a class of academic surgeons developed. By my time a surgeon enjoyed as much prestige as any other physician. My father, who had no academic training but had learned to operate on fistulas and hernias from an immigrant Scot, saw himself as still playing the role of one of the old-fashioned barbers.

He never overcame a sense of inferiority and a longing to be a proper physician and surgeon.

Not that he had any reason to be discontented with the fruits of his life. His work—much of it in the states of the Middle West and South where horseback riding was common and intestinal fistulas and ruptures were therefore frequent—had brought him prestige and wealth.

Father performed his operations in plantation mansions, upon river barges, inside covered wagons, and even under the open sky, with his patient doubled over the shaft of the wagon, screaming with pain or clenching his teeth upon a piece of leather. He had many successes, for all that he treated his knife as though it were just a piece of table wear, took his bandage materials from a box which month after month had been jogged through the dust of bad roads, and applied his salves with a flat stick whittled from a chunk of firewood. Like Félix, he had the good luck to be operating upon a part of the body which did not produce a fatal infection.

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But in spite of his prosperous career, my father's sense of inferiority gnawed at him all his life. His dream was that I, his son, would become a real physician and if possible study under such a famous surgeon as John Collins Warren, Professor of Anatomy and Operative Surgery at the Medical School of Harvard University and Massachusetts General Hospital.

Warren had studied medicine in Europe in the early 1800's, and had learned everything about surgery that could be learned there. At Guy's Hospital in London he had, according to the custom of the time, paid fifty pounds for a post as "dresser," thus acquiring the right to execute minor operations, whereas the cheaper twenty-five-pound post of "walker" permitted only observation of operations. Those were the days when English surgeons had to become grave robbers in order to obtain cadavers for their investigations of human anatomy.

In London Warren became fascinated by anatomical research. When he returned to Boston, his anatomical museum became famous; his favourite portrait showed him holding a skull in his hand. If McDowell was the hero of my boyhood, my father had made Warren my model long before I entered Harvard Medical School.

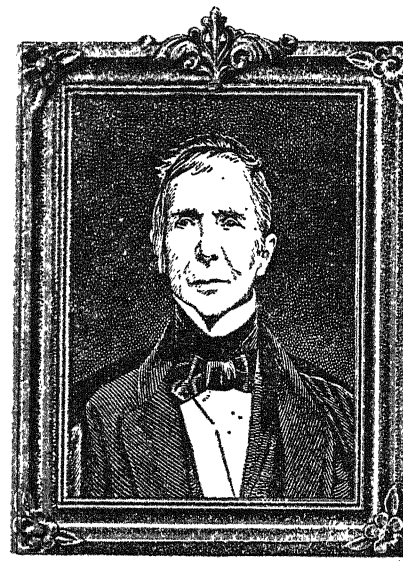
Finally, one day in November 1843, I entered the operating-room of Massachusetts General Hospital, with other students of the new class, to watch the great Warren at work.

I remember distinctly my first sight of the operating-chair, upholstered in red plush, with an adjustable back. I looked up at the rows of students and other spectators on the benches which rose in a semicircle above the operating-theatre.

In those days new students were always the object of a certain malicious anticipation. The attendants had instructions to remove at once any of them who showed signs of faintness or sickness during an operation. Outside the room, a bed was always in readiness where the hapless student could be laid down with head lower than feet. But I had stood at my father's side since the age of twelve, listening to the screams of his patients, and I regarded these signs of torment so much as part of an operation that I felt certain I would show no weakness while I watched for the first time the great Warren at work.

Two operations had been announced for that day—certainly not a very impressive figure by present-day standards. At that time, however,

when surgery was accompanied by incredible pain and when death stood directly behind the surgeon's back, only utter hopelessness, or suffering so intense that no operative pain could be worse, would lead a patient to the "red chair." In the years from 1821 to 1823, the annals of Massachusetts General Hospital, which was considered easily equal to the best hospitals in England and France, recorded only forty-three operations. The scheduling of two operations in a single morning was actually something unusual.



Dr. John Collins Warren, 1778–1856

It was exactly ten o'clock when Warren, followed by a number of assistants, entered the operating-room. Warren was sixty-five at that time. He was a slender man of medium height, with a thin neck concealed within a high collar, and a cold, sternly controlled, smooth-shaven face under sparse grey hair. He was dressed with somewhat excessive care.

There was a distinct solemnity about his entrance and all his actions seemed to be nicely calculated for effect. He did not—like some other surgeons—pride himself on the speed of his incisions, which alone

limited pain, nor operate with a stop-watch at his side; he was nevertheless a master of cool, systematic planning.

Up to the moment two attendants carried the first patient into the operating-theatre Warren had not said a word. Now he solemnly removed his fashionable jacket and took from a "dresser" another jacket which was stiff with the dried blood of innumerable past operations. The patient, a big, heavy man whose features were tense with fear, was laid on a wooden table. Then Warren's thin lips parted and he began to explain the case.

The patient's thigh, dislocated at the hip and untreated for a long time, had become fixed in its unnatural position. In order to free it, the attendants tied a strong rope round the upper part of the man's body. The end of this rope was fastened to one of the two heavy uprights which were embedded in the floor. Strong leather thongs were wound round the thigh, and these were connected to the opposite post by a second rope to which a pulley-block had been attached.

When the attendants drew on the rope, only the squeaking of the pulley-block was heard at first. But then came the patient's first scream. It shrieked through the room, and sweat poured out over the man's face. His body seemed to hover above the table as the rope grew tauter.

Warren did not stir. I noticed the student in front of me turn deathly pale and stagger away from his bench. The attendants went on with their task.

It was ten minutes, ten indescribably long minutes, before Warren made a sign with his hands. The attendants at the pulley-block stopped and slackened the rope slightly, so that the patient sank back, panting, on the table. With completely expressionless face Warren examined the man. The thigh had not moved from its unnatural position. Warren ordered the men to slacken the rope a little more and to turn the patient somewhat on his side, giving him a moment to recover.

Evidently the great surgeon had no use for a method of alleviating pain which I had recently observed during a similar operation which my father had taken me to witness. Then the "dresser," to my utter amazement, had produced a long black cigar and thrust it half-way into the patient's rectum.

The surgeon afterwards explained to my father that, since the large

quantities of brandy and opium which were generally given before operations were virtually ineffective against operative pain, the patient's muscles would tense convulsively, in involuntary defence against the pain, making the setting of a dislocated joint difficult. It had been observed that nicotine produced not actual painlessness but considerable muscular relaxation. For a time, consequently, during these operations a distillate of tobacco had been injected into the intestines, where it was promptly absorbed. However, some fatal nicotine poisonings had followed successful operations. The introduction of a strong cigar into the intestine had therefore been adopted. In this case the absorption was slower and the cigar could be withdrawn as soon as the nicotine had done its work.

Warren, however, did not employ this method. At a sign from him the attendants resumed their work at the pulley. The patient's face now seemed calm and composed. But after half a minute it contorted once more. Another scream sounded—and once again the rising and falling cries of torment began. Two more students crept out of the room, shoulders hunched, hands pressed against their faces. I myself had to look up at the ceiling for a moment because I could no longer endure the sight of the tortured man. When, after about thirty minutes and a second and third attempt, the thigh had still not moved, Warren gave up. He declared, while the half-unconscious patient was carried out, that the man had come to him for treatment too late.

Then, with apparent indifference, the famous surgeon turned to the next patient—a young man who looked completely healthy, but whose tongue was to be partially amputated and whose eyes roved uneasily as he entered the operating-theatre.

Warren gestured curtly to the chair, which had been moved by the attendants so that its back was to the doorway through which the patient had entered. As the young man hesitantly sat down, an attendant, unseen by him, came up behind the chair with a portable charcoal burner upon which lay, already glowing white-hot, several surgical cautery irons.

Warren was holding a forceps in his left hand, a scalpel in his right. With his thumb he tested the edge of the blade. One of the resident surgeons, a big powerful man, stepped up close behind the chair, ready to hold the young man's head. Warren ordered the young man to put

out his tongue. The patient nervously obeyed. As his tongue emerged, it was possible to see the huge growth that disfigured its tip.

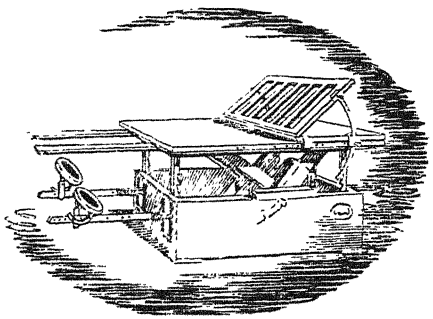
Warren's left hand flashed forward and gripped the tongue with the forceps. Fractions of a second later the knife in his right hand sliced through the end of the tongue with a single rapid slash. Warren tossed the scalpel on to the instrument table and stretched his arm out behind the operating-chair so that the attendant could place the handle of a glowing cautery iron into his hand without being seen by the dazed patient. Warren held the cautery iron behind his back. With a sudden movement, the resident surgeon covered the dazed patient's eyes with his hands—and Warren pressed the red-hot iron against the bleeding wound.

The patient, struck by frightful pain, tried to jerk his head back, and pushed himself and the chair several yards across the room. The assistant staggered and barely managed to retain his hold on the patient's head, but Warren followed right after the moving chair. He kept pressing the iron against the wound until it all was cauterized. Then he snapped the forceps open and took a step back. The resident surgeon relaxed his grip. The patient pressed both hands over his mouth. He sprang to his feet, and reeled blindly about until two attendants seized him and led him out. Warren looked after him coldly, utterly unmoved by the man's torment.

IT WOULD be entirely logical to ask me why, after this first encounter with the finest surgery of my youth, I did not give up for ever the thought of being a surgeon, even if that meant disappointing my father in his heart's desire. But conceptions of what is inhuman and horrible differ in different periods. Horrible things lose a great deal of their horror if, as was then the case, they are considered part of the unalterable law of human life. In those days a man like Warren did not strike us as a butcher, but as a hero who was strong and stoical enough to look straight upon the most frightful human suffering and nevertheless go on extending what in many cases was the only aid the age had to offer.

Still, that tongue amputation was a nightmare that haunted me for a long time afterwards. It also made me doubt, for the first time, that I would ever become a good practical surgeon. Beyond that, this first experience became for me a permanent symbol of the state of surgery shortly before the discovery of anaesthesia changed the entire outlook.

THE AWAKENING CENTURY



A Nineteenth-century Operating-chair

Discovery: Act One

THE CENTURY of modern surgery began in the operating-room of Massachusetts General Hospital—the same room in which I had watched that horrible amputation of a cancerous tongue—on October 16, 1846. That day marked the birth of the art of producing insensibility to pain by the inhalation of chemical gases. When we saw a young man lie quietly under Warren's knife, uttering not a sound, feeling none of the inconceivable pain that countless human beings had endured before him, our whole world was transformed in a sudden blinding flash.

Today we know that the discovery of anaesthesia was not as sudden as it then appeared. As early as 1800 the English chemist Sir Humphry Davy had relieved the pain of an infected tooth by inhaling nitrous oxide, or laughing gas. Davy even published a paper suggesting the use of nitrous oxide in surgical operations. No one took note of his idea, and he himself failed to follow it up.

Some two decades later, in 1823, a young English physician named

Henry Hill Hickman, too soft-hearted to endure his patients' screams of pain, successfully rendered animals insensible with carbon dioxide and operated painlessly upon them. Hickman was discouraged because he came close to poisoning his subjects fatally, but it would have been but a small step from carbon dioxide to more suitable gases. He did not make the attempt.

Today we know also that in 1842 Dr. Crawford W. Long, a country doctor in Jefferson, Georgia, administered ether to operate painlessly upon several patients. The case of a young man named James M. Venable, afflicted with boils on the neck, had suggested the idea to him. As a way of getting drunk, Venable and several other young blades would sit together smelling flasks of ether until they felt intoxicated. Dr. Long, who usually filled his patients with strong liquor before operations, thought it might be simpler to have Venable take his customary ether instead. After lancing the boils he learned to his astonishment that the young man had felt no pain at all. It never occurred to Long that he had made a world-shaking discovery; he went on with his quiet provincial practice. And other doctors had tried similar experiments.

In 1846, therefore, the discovery of anaesthesia had been imminent for almost fifty years. But in the days when I was a student surgeon it struck me and my contemporaries as a tremendous, unforeshadowed revelation. If it had any history at all, that history—for us—went back only to a day in January 1845.

On that day, Dr. Warren, in the old operating-room of Massachusetts General Hospital, was lecturing on trepanation of the skull. The method, inconceivable today, of opening the skull with crude drills was thousands of years old, and the operation, designed to remove bone splinters resulting from accidents or wounds, or to attempt to relieve unendurable headaches, was almost always fatal. Since there was not much to say on the subject, except that the operation was best avoided, it was sheer chance that I sat in the sparse audience. When Warren finished he casually waved his hand towards a red-headed young man waiting nearby.

"There is a gentleman from Hartford here," said Warren sarcastically, "who purports to have something which will destroy pain in a surgical operation. If any of you wish to hear him, you are at liberty to do so."

We all knew his thesis that pain and the knife were inseparable, so we understood that he was turning over to our tender mercies a visionary layman who was about to make a fool of himself. We were ready to break into derisive laughter.

There was no surgical case available, Warren continued, but this gentleman, Mr. Horace Wells, claimed to practise painless dentistry. If anyone in the auditorium needed a tooth extracted and was willing to try the new method, would he please step forward?

Warren turned the floor over to Mr. Wells, and settled into a chair like a sceptical spectator in a theatre. The slight, rather short young dentist stood up, hesitant and unsure. I could see that he had a gentle, dreamer's face with startlingly bright blue eyes. In one hand he carried a small satchel and an inflated rubber bag. In a low, stumbling voice he explained that he had discovered by chance that nitrous oxide, or laughing gas, could render people completely insensible to pain. If, he said, one inhaled it expecting to laugh, one would grow animated. But if, on the other hand, one wished to fall asleep, one would fall asleep.

Nowadays there is nothing unusual in an anaesthetist's helping to induce sleep by verbal suggestion. But at the time Wells's explanation seemed strange. All of us were familiar with laughing gas. Travelling shows were inviting spectators to come up on the stage to inhale it, and amuse the rest of the audience by their crazy capers. So when Wells's eyes flickered round the room, the faces he saw were full of mockery.

At last a florid-faced, fat stranger shuffled slowly into the arena, went up to Wells, and pointed out one of his teeth.

Wells took a number of dental instruments from his satchel. Then he made the stranger sit down, held the rubber bag in front of his mouth, and, asking the patient to breathe deeply, began turning a wooden petcock attached to the bag. His hands were perceptibly shaking, and the imploring tone in which he spoke to the patient aroused all the repressed scorn in the audience.

I watched the man in the operating-chair closely. Suddenly I was startled out of my disdain. The man's heavy head drooped forward. His lips took on a bluish hue. He uttered incoherent sounds and stared blankly. Then he fell silent and motionless.

At that moment Wells laid aside the rubber bag, picked up his forceps, opened the patient's mouth and grasped the tooth with the forceps. I

knew from personal experience that the mere touch of the forceps usually brought forth a violent scream. But the man in the chair did not move as the forceps closed round the tooth. A breathless silence filled the room.

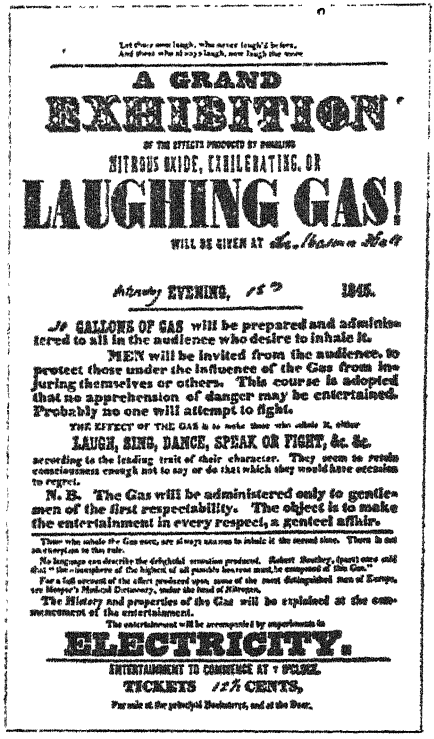
But then, just as Wells started to extract the tooth, loud screams burst from the patient's throat. I saw Wells draw the forceps, the tooth between its claws, out of the patient's mouth. With an expression of boundless confusion, he held it numbly before him. In the topmost row behind me someone laughed; and the laughter rolled downward from row to row, until the whole amphitheatre was filled with it. Then someone shouted: "Humbug!" A second student took up the cry, then a third, until the whole audience was shouting in a mocking chorus: "Humbug, humbug!" And I shouted with the rest while Wells stood there white-faced.

I do not know how long this spectacle would have lasted if Warren had not stepped into the arena and raised his hand. A single movement sufficed to suppress the laughter and the shouting. His voice was formal, but annihilating. He made it plain to Wells that any comment would be superfluous. Then he turned and stalked out of the amphitheatre. As soon as the door closed behind him, laughter and catcalls rang out once more. Wells threw his instruments into his satchel and hurried to the door, shoulders stooped, head lowered, eyes fixed upon the floor.

HAD I BEEN told then that I had witnessed the début of a new era in medicine, and that Wells would go down in history as the discoverer of anaesthetic gases, I would undoubtedly have continued to laugh. I could not know, of course, that an obese (and possibly alcoholic) person would normally react poorly to laughing gas. Nor could I guess that an unaided dentist would not be able both to administer the gas and to perform the operation.

The story of Horace Wells's magnificent discovery—which did him so little good—had begun in Hartford, Connecticut, five weeks before the scene I had witnessed at Massachusetts General Hospital. On the morning of December 10, 1844, the Hartford *Courant* ran an advertisement for a "grand exhibition of laughing gas."

The director of this itinerant "laughing-gas show" was a man named Gardner Quincy Colton who had some knowledge of chemistry. His performance on the evening of December 10, 1844, was sold out. Among the spectators was Horace Wells, accompanied by his wife, Liza.



Let those now laugh, who never laugh'd before,
And those who always laugh, now laugh the more

A GRAND

EXHIBITION

OF THE EFFECTS PRODUCED BY INHALING

NITROUS OXIDE, EXHILERATING, OR

LAUGHING GAS!

WILL BE GIVEN AT the Museum Hall

Saturday EVENING, 15th 1845.

A GALLOWE OF GAS will be prepared and administered to all in the audience who desire to inhale it.

MEN will be invited from the audience, to protect those under the influence of the Gas from injuring themselves or others. This course is adopted that no apprehension of danger may be entertained. Probably no one will attempt to fight.

THE EFFECT OF THE GAS is to make those who inhale it, either

LAUGH, SING, DANCE, SPEAK OR FIGHT, &c. &c.

according to the leading trait of their character. They seem to retain consciousness enough not to say or do that which they would have occasion to regret.

N. B. The Gas will be administered only to gentlemen of the first respectability. The object is to make the entertainment in every respect, a genteel affair.

Those who inhale the Gas once, are always anxious to inhale it the second time. There is not an exception to this rule.

No language can describe the delightful sensation produced. Robert Southey, (poet) once said that "the atmosphere of the highest of all possible heavens must be composed of this Gas."

For a full account of the effect produced upon some of the most distinguished men of Europe, see Hooper's Medical Dictionary, under the head of Nitrogen.

The History and properties of the Gas will be explained at the commencement of the entertainment.

The entertainment will be accompanied by experiments in

ELECTRICITY.

ENTERTAINMENT TO COMMENCE AT 7 PRECISE.

TICKETS 12½ CENTS,

For sale at the principal Bookstores, and at the Door.

Though quiet, modest and sometimes socially awkward, Wells was already, at twenty-nine, a much sought-after dentist, one of the most respected citizens of Hartford.

The United States was at this time unusually progressive in oral medicine, although the study of dentistry was merely a matter of apprenticeship to master dentists. Wells had already trained apprentices of his own. Among these were his assistant, John Mankey Riggs, and William T. G. Morton, who for a time had manufactured a novel type of denture in partnership with Wells but had given it up to become a dentist in Boston. The undertaking had failed because the new denture, unlike previous ones, required the removal of existing roots and stumps of teeth. Patients, fearing this painful extraction, would have no part of the novelty.

This failure probably aroused in the ingenious, ever-seeking mind of Wells the ancient dream of eliminating the pain of extractions. Perhaps this is why, on the evening of Colton's show, Wells was the first to see what others before him had not recognized.

Wells himself went up on the stage, although his wife, with her strong sense of propriety, tried to prevent him. He inhaled laughing gas, and danced, laughed and sang on the stage, and Liza later said with acute embarrassment that Horace had "made a spectacle of himself." Awaking from his state of intoxication, Wells returned to his seat beside his pained wife.

Now as he sat watching the show he noticed on the stage a fellow citizen of Hartford, Samuel Cooley. Cavorting about, Cooley knocked his shin hard against the edge of a bench. Involuntarily Wells winced. He expected Cooley to come to his senses, howl with pain, and grasp his leg. But nothing of the sort happened. Cooley went straight on dancing and singing.

At that point an idea sprang to Horace Wells's mind. When a few minutes later Cooley left the stage Wells rushed over to him. "You must have hurt yourself," he said.

Cooley was taken aback, but under Wells's urgent questioning he laughingly pulled up his trouser leg—and paused half-way. His leg was bleeding from a deep gash, and suddenly he became conscious of severe pain.

Wells stood there absently for a moment, and then turned towards an acquaintance, David Clark. Clark noted the strange gleam in Wells's eyes, and heard from his lips a sentence which he later repeated a hundred times over.

"I believe," Wells said, "a man could have a tooth pulled or a leg amputated while under the influence of this gas, and not feel it."

As soon as the performance was over, Wells hurried forward to see its director, Gardner Colton. He discussed his idea without reserve and asked the showman to come to his surgery the following morning with a supply of laughing gas. Something of his fervour communicated itself to Colton, who was himself an emotional and excitable person.

Punctually at ten o'clock the following morning a group of five men assembled in Wells's surgery: Wells himself, Riggs, Colton, Colton's brother and Cooley. A nervous silence prevailed.

Wells took his seat in the dental chair. Since the idea had come from him, he said, he was responsible for its testing. He himself would take Colton's gas, and Riggs must pull one of his teeth. Colton thrust the opening of a rubber bag filled with laughing gas between Wells's lips. Riggs, as he later narrated, suddenly went to the door and opened it wide, so that all of them could flee the room in case Wells became raving mad from the effects of too great a dose of the gas.

Then Colton opened the pet-cock, releasing the gas. Wells coughed briefly, and then began breathing deeply. His face became very pale, then assumed a bluish hue. His eyes glazed over. Riggs, fully aware of

how closely they might be approaching the frontiers of death, bent over Wells. Wells's right hand twitched as though he wanted to give some signal, but dropped back feebly. Immediately afterwards, his eyelids closed and his head fell forward.

Riggs picked up the dental forceps. He signed to Colton to remove the balloon of gas from Wells's lips. Then he opened Wells's unresisting jaw. He reached in with the forceps, feeling—every detail remained imprinted on his memory—the furious pounding of his own heart. He grasped the tooth and moved it in its bed, expecting every second to hear the customary cries of pain. But Wells did not even stir. Riggs pulled. A moment later he held up the forceps, with the tooth in its claws. Wells still had not stirred—and yet he was still breathing.

Riggs looked round the circle. No one could say a word. Staring intently at Wells's face, they saw the natural colour was returning. His arms and hands moved. He opened his eyes, raised his head, and when he saw the tooth still dangling from the forceps in Riggs's hand, he uttered the historic words: "I felt it no more than the prick of a pin." When the others still remained silent, he added: "This is the most wonderful discovery of our time."

FROM THAT day on Wells was a changed man. He forgot his wife, his home; he lived only for his discovery. After learning how to produce nitrous oxide in his laboratory, he experimented on himself day after day. He also inhaled other gases which were commonly used in shows like Gardner Colton's. Chief of these was sulphuric ether. But since ether was harder to inhale than nitrous oxide, it seemed to him less practicable. Wells stuck to laughing gas. Finally he ventured to try it on a patient for the first time.

By January 1845 he had used it fourteen or fifteen times, with a high rate of success. Before long all Hartford knew that Wells pulled teeth painlessly, and his waiting-room was packed. But Wells's imagination had already leaped beyond the narrow confines of Hartford. The elimination of pain from surgical operations was, he realized, even more vital than its elimination from dentistry. He was sure his discovery would make its way into the world if he could demonstrate in Boston, before the great Dr. Warren, that a painless operation was no longer a dream but reality.

Riggs later recounted how feverishly eager Wells was as he set out for Boston. His closest acquaintance there was Morton, his former pupil and partner. With rather childlike trustfulness, Wells went to Morton and told him the story of his epic discovery.

Morton, who was a distinctly practical young man with a dash of daring, seems to have shown no especial interest. But he proposed that he and Wells go to Professor Charles Jackson, head of a Boston laboratory, whom they had once consulted on a chemical question. If Jackson evinced interest in the discovery, a great deal would be gained, for his reputation as a scientist was then at its peak. Jackson was a man of extraordinary learning and arrogance whose vaunting ambition was notorious. At this time he was engaged in a dispute with Morse, claiming on highly dubious grounds his own priority in the invention of the telegraph.

On January 17, 1845, Wells and Morton called on him, and awkwardly but enthusiastically Wells explained his discovery. When he had finished, Jackson's mouth curved in condescending scorn. He mentioned the methods of overcoming pain which had been attempted over the ages: opium, mandragora, Indian hemp, Mesmer's hypnosis. His verdict was: It had all been in vain and would for ever be in vain. In any case a petty dentist from Hartford would not change scientific opinion.

We can imagine the shock Wells experienced when Jackson waved him aside. He set out to meet Warren at Massachusetts General Hospital with the seed of insecurity already planted in his soul. Just how he established contact with Warren I have never learned. In any case, when Warren introduced Wells to us in the operating-theatre, the sarcasm and prejudice that underlay his politeness must have shattered what self-assurance Wells had left.

So many witnesses afterwards mentioned Morton's presence at Wells's experiment that it must be considered certain that he was there. It is said that, with the first peal of mocking laughter, he slipped out of the room. Morton was not interested in theories unless they had some obvious utilitarian value. So he returned to his dental surgery where good money was to be made.

Wells, meanwhile, returned to Hartford. There, shortly afterwards, he fell ill with some undiagnosed disease. Perhaps he was already suffering from the effects of his personal experiments with laughing gas. For

no one knew then that laughing gas, when used as an anaesthetic, must be supplemented with oxygen. As yet, the faces of patients turned ashen and their lips blue whenever nitrous oxide was administered. Finally, Wells became so ill that from April to July 1845 he had to turn his practice over to Riggs.

In July 1845, Morton unexpectedly called upon Wells in Hartford to settle some business matters. Afterwards they fell to discussing the use of laughing gas. It turned out that Wells had by no means given up; he was now recovering from his illness, and had made further experiments upon himself. Morton asked a few questions, but seemed to take no real interest in the subject.

Then, in the spring of 1846, Morton met a young lady named Elizabeth Williams, who later testified to this meeting. She told him that she had recently had a tooth pulled by Dr. Wells, the Hartford dentist. He had given her a gas to inhale, and then extracted the tooth without causing her the slightest pain.

Now Morton pricked up his ears.

At the end of September 1846 a wealthy woman patient called on Morton. She needed a denture but, fearing the pain of root extraction, was inclined to forgo it.

Morton saw a good piece of business slipping away, and at that moment he began to act.

On September 30, 1846, Morton again visited the chemical laboratory of Professor Jackson. The professor had no nitrous oxide on hand, but he sneeringly suggested that Morton could try sulphuric ether, since that would have the same effect.

"Sulphuric ether?" Morton asked. "What is that?"

Condescendingly, Jackson explained to this "ignoramus"—a term he later applied frequently to Morton—that sulphuric ether was a liquid which vaporized on contact with air, and that it would no more relieve real pain than laughing gas.

Morton asked whether ether was safe to use. Jackson reassured him and told him how to administer it. Morton then bought a flask of rectified sulphuric ether, and returned home.

But September 30, 1846, was not yet over.

Towards evening a man named Eben H. Frost came to Morton's surgery. One side of his face was badly swollen, and he was in great

pain. Frost begged Morton's associate, Dr. Grenville G. Hayden, to extract the infected tooth painlessly by the use of mesmerism which he had read about somewhere.

When Morton was informed of this strange request he declared that he himself would take the patient. Then he went in to Frost, and told him he had something better than mesmerism. With Hayden holding a lamp close to the patient, and a young assistant, Tenney, standing by, Morton opened his flask of ether. Soaking a handkerchief with ether, he held it in front of Frost's face. Frost became unconscious almost immediately. Morton himself was so stunned by his success that he lost several precious seconds. Hayden and Tenney, as they later testified, literally forgot to breathe. Then Morton opened Frost's mouth, inserted the forceps, loosened the tooth with several ruthless movements, and pulled.

Frost had not stirred. A few seconds passed. Then, slowly, Frost began to come to. Morton put down the forceps. His dumbfounded expression changed to one of triumph.

And then he did something which gives a significant insight into his character.

At last he had realized that Wells's discovery was one of tremendous value. The man who held this secret possessed the key to wealth, for every human being feared pain. Doctors would pay any price for such a secret. Morton drew up a statement describing the painless extraction. Twenty minutes later, when Frost had completely recovered from the ether narcosis, Morton asked him to sign the affidavit and Frost did so.

Morton had the document countersigned by Hayden and Tenney, who added: "We witnessed the above operation, and the statement is, in all respects, correct, and what is more, the man (on awaking) asked where his tooth was, or if it was out."

That same evening Morton apparently took the signed document to the Boston *Daily Journal*. On the next day, the following item appeared in the *Journal:* "Last evening, as we were informed by a gentleman who witnessed the operation, an ulcerated tooth was extracted from the mouth of an individual, without giving the slightest pain. He was put into a kind of sleep, by inhaling a preparation, the effects of which lasted . . . just long enough to extract the tooth."

It is significant that neither Frost's statement nor the newspaper account mentioned the word "ether"—an indication that Morton was

alert to future business possibilities. Unlike Wells, he did not think of the universal blessing the discovery meant. From the first he hankered for a "secret" substance that he could patent and sell, at a high price, to the doctors and sufferers of the world.

But ether had, after all, been known to chemists and doctors for centuries. It was used not only for entertainment, like laughing gas, but as a medicine for "lung affections." During the first days of October, therefore Morton mixed ether with perfumes to disguise its characteristic odour. Then, as Wells had done before him, he went to Massachusetts General Hospital to see Dr. Warren.

He called first on Dr. Henry Jacob Bigelow, Warren's first assistant. And by tenacity and perseverance he accomplished the impossible: in spite of Wells's fiasco in January 1845, Morton prevailed upon Bigelow —and through Bigelow on the hard-headed Warren—to permit a second experiment in the operating-theatre of Massachusetts General Hospital. Morton seems to have convinced both surgeons that he had discovered an entirely new analgesic "preparation." At any rate, he received a letter from Massachusetts General Hospital, inviting him to be present on Friday, October 16, at ten o'clock in the morning "to administer to a patient who is then to be operated upon, the preparation which you have invented to diminish the sensibility to pain."

By this time Morton had already treated a considerable number of patients who had come flocking to him for painless dentistry. In two cases the method was not effective. Morton concluded that he must use larger quantities of ether and he had a glass globe made. Inside it was a large sponge which could be soaked with ether. The neck of the globe was thrust between the patient's lips. On the day Morton received the invitation from the hospital, a Dr. Gould, in whose house Morton lived, suggested that the neck of the globe be provided with a valve, so that the air the patient exhaled would not return to the globe, thus diluting the ether vapour. Morton hastened to a Boston instrument maker in order to obtain an improved globe for use at the hospital trial.

At nine-thirty on the morning of October 16, one half-hour before the beginning of the trial, this globe was not yet ready. When at last, shortly before ten o'clock, the instrument was finished, Morton literally snatched it up and raced towards the hospital, meeting Eben Frost on the way, and appeared, panting for breath, at the door of the operating-room.



Early Experimental Anaesthesia Mask

Act Two

I SHALL never forget that sixteenth of October, 1846. It bore an uncanny resemblance to the day some twenty-one months before when we had laughed Horace Wells out of the same room. I had meanwhile obtained my degree and attached myself to Dr. Cotting in Boston, to secure a little experience in practice.

On October 15 Dr. Cotting informed me that on the following day, at the hospital, a dentist would try out a new method for making operations painless. With my youthful fondness for low comedy, I thought of nothing but the entertainment Wells's failure had afforded all of us students. I decided to accompany Cotting.

Virtually everyone in the medical school was looking forward to the show, and the morning of October 16 found the stands already packed with an expectant crowd of cynical spectators. Several patients were waiting in their usual state, deathly pale from fear. On the chair in the arena sat the first patient, Gilbert Abbott, a young man with a tumour of the maxillary gland and tongue. Near the red plush operating-chair stood Warren's colleagues, Drs. Hayward, Gould, Townsend and Bigelow. Warren delivered his lecture on the case. Then, in the same sarcastic tone he had employed twenty-one months before, he announced: "We are going to test a preparation for which the astonishing claim is made that it will render the person operated on free from pain."

Stiffly, formally, Warren turned his head to right and left as if looking

for someone. His eyes narrowed. Morton had not come. We waited nearly fifteen minutes. All the while Warren stood with watch in hand, his face still impassive. We could guess the anger behind those expressionless features. After a few minutes, the first scornful remarks could be heard among the students. The whispering and chuckling grew louder with each passing minute.

At last Warren spoke up, in a thin, mocking voice: "As Dr. Morton has not arrived, I presume he is otherwise engaged."

Even as he spoke, the outer door flew open. In the doorway, perspiring and breathing heavily, stood a dark, harried-looking, sharp-featured man in his early thirties. In his left hand he carried a globe of glass about the size of a child's head, with two glass nipples. Behind him, breathing just as rapidly, stood a second man.

Warren turned his head to the side. In a tight voice he said: "Well, sir! Your patient is ready."

Morton stepped forward into the arena. Briefly and without shyness, he explained his lateness. Then he went up to Abbott, who was watching him fearfully. Indicating his companion, Morton said he had brought with him Mr. Eben Frost, who had already taken his preparation. Then he asked Abbott: "Are you afraid?"

"No," Abbott replied. "I feel confident and will do precisely as you tell me."

Morton inserted the glass mouthpiece between Abbott's lips and instructed him to breathe deeply. Every word reminded me of the red-haired Wells, and laughter was already bubbling up round me. Cruel as it may sound today, we had all become so hardened by our studies that we were only waiting for Abbott to utter his first scream. In my anticipation I did not notice that Morton had let the patient breathe the vapour a good deal longer than Wells had done. I was literally longing for his defeat, the more because he showed none of the modesty and shyness that Wells had displayed. Abbott now uttered a curious muted sound. Morton ordered him to continue breathing deeply. Abbott's lips parted, releasing the glass nipple. His lower lip hung slackly and his head fell to one side of the operating-chair, which was tilted back. His eyes closed. Morton moved the glass sphere aside, straightened up, and repeated the words that Warren had addressed to him a few minutes before: "Sir, your patient is ready."

Silently, Warren rolled up his sleeves, took his scalpel in hand, and bent over Abbott. Then, with a lightning motion, he made the first incision. There was utter silence in the hall. The faintest groan or sigh would have been heard.

But the patient made no sound whatever. Warren—astonishment in his face for the first time—stooped closer. He made a second and a third incision. Carefully, he scraped out the tumour. Nothing! Not a sound! The surgeon applied a ligature, pressed the usual sponges on the wound to stanch the bleeding.

Still nothing—nothing but silence.

Warren straightened up, the scalpel still in his hand, his face paler than usual. His eyes seemed alight with the glory of an inconceivable miracle. "Gentlemen," he exclaimed at last, "this is no humbug." And suddenly there was wetness on the lined, parched-looking cheeks. Warren, the terse, aloof, unemotional Warren, had tears in his eyes.

FOR ALL of us there are certain memory pictures that are unalterable and indestructible. One of these is, for me, the tears on Warren's hardened face. They lasted only a few seconds. With an imperious gesture, he wiped them away.

Everything had happened so fast that none of us really had time to comprehend what we had seen. Nevertheless, I doubt that there was a single witness who failed to sense that the doors were opening on a new age of surgery.

Even as I still sat stunned, I seemed to see "our discovery," the discovery emanating from the hospital where I had studied medicine, making its way to Europe. Europe had never heard of us here in Boston, but nevertheless we were going to give European medicine the discovery of the century. I saw the new technique conquering all the capitals of surgery—Edinburgh, London, Paris.

We had not yet been told, however, that Morton's magic preparation was sulphuric ether. That same afternoon, I was later to learn, Drs. Warren, Bigelow and Hayward asked Morton for the chemical combination of his preparation. To their surprise, he refused to say. When Bigelow indicated that he thought it must be ether, Morton emphatically denied this; he stated that some ether was used, but that the actual effect depended on other components. The doctors pointed out to him that it

was not customary to keep secret a medical discovery of such importance for all of humanity. For two and a half weeks a clandestine battle was fought. Several times the doctors threatened to withdraw their support unless Morton would reveal the secret of his preparation.

Morton remained stubborn. With all possible dispatch he set about the commercial exploitation of his secret. He knew that he alone deserved full historical credit for first demonstrating anaesthesia convincingly. But he knew also that the discoverer of the principle was Wells. On October 19 he made a curious attempt to eliminate any possible claims on Wells's part by writing to offer him a share in the new business. The boastful account he gave of his own smashing success, in the very place where Wells had failed so miserably, must have struck Wells a psychological blow. But he replied at once. His answer showed concern lest Morton's hasty commercialism should defeat the whole object of the discovery.

"Dear Sir," Wells wrote, "Your letter is just received, and I hasten to answer it, for I fear you will adopt a method of disposing of your rights which will defeat your object. Before you make any arrangements whatever I wish to see you."

I have not been able to determine when Wells actually saw Morton. In any case, Morton contrived to keep Wells from making any claim until he himself applied for a patent. He then turned upon the other, more dangerous man to whom he owed his success—Charles Jackson, who had first suggested ether to him. He offered Jackson ten per cent of all the income he hoped to obtain, provided Jackson raised no objection to Morton's taking out the patent in his own name. Strangely enough, Jackson consented.

Morton now waited feverishly for the issuance of the patent. Since he could not patent ether, he had based his application on the method of inhalation, his glass globe. He naïvely hoped he would be able tacitly to link his preparation with this patent. At the suggestion of his assistant, Tenney, he named his perfumed ether "letheon—drink of forgetfulness." Later, Oliver Wendell Holmes was to bestow the name which spread round the world: "anaesthesia."

Before the end of October 1846 Morton was already commissioning representatives throughout the nation to offer licences for his preparation. In towns of five to ten thousand inhabitants he required dentists

to pay him fifty dollars for a period of five years. In cities of more than a hundred thousand he charged two hundred dollars. From surgeons he demanded twenty-five per cent of the fee from all operations in which his preparation was used. He put out feelers to England and France.

Morton was riding high when the first blow struck him. On November 4, 1846, Dr. Hayward, at Massachusetts General Hospital, felt obliged to seek Morton's aid for a notably painful operation on an elderly woman. But this time Morton failed. For one and a half hours he struggled in vain to place the patient under anaesthesia. She coughed, fought, struck out wildly, but did not lose consciousness. No doubt she was one of those persons who are difficult to anaesthetize without preliminary sedatives.

Pale and perspiring, Morton left the operating-room. Then, apparently seized by a kind of panic, and determined to tie the doctors to his cause, he wrote a letter to the medical staff of Massachusetts General. He confessed that his preparation consisted of nothing but ether, in combination with a few aromatic substances. At the same time, he implored the medical staff not to let the secret go beyond them, and asked for another opportunity to demonstrate the effect of ether in a major operation.

He was given this opportunity—but only on his agreeing to have his statement on the nature of his preparation read aloud to the packed gallery before the operation began. Morton yielded to necessity, and the operation took place painlessly on November 7, 1846. It saved Morton from utter ruin, and a few days later he resumed the fierce struggle to secure his "financial rights." On November 12, 1846, a patent on his method of administering a narcotic agent was actually issued to him.

But now Charles Jackson entered the fray. Once he became aware of the true extent of Morton's fame, his egocentric nature could not brook it, and he wrote a widely circulated statement falsely depicting himself to other scientists in Europe and America as the real discoverer of ether anaesthesia. Morton, he said, had been sent to Massachusetts General as his emissary.

When Morton learned of this, he promptly replied. He, on his part, invented a story saying that he had been familiar with the anaesthetic effect of ether long before he had gone to Jackson on September 30, and claiming that he had conducted innumerable experiments on animals and human beings.

Thus began an ugly struggle between Charles Jackson, who craved fame, and William Green Morton, who craved both fame and money. Each would have it that he alone had discovered not only ether anaesthesia, but the principle of anaesthesia in general. Neither said a word about Horace Wells.

But Wells was not yet dead, though long illness had not only weakened him physically but brought him close to financial ruin. In 1847 he wrote a reticent paper for the Boston *Medical and Surgical Journal*, declaring his discovery of anaesthesia, and concluding with the words: "I close, wishing in all sincerity to receive no more credit for this discovery than that, in justice, I am entitled to."

When shortly afterwards Wells went to Paris on a business venture, hoping to improve his fortunes, he found himself suddenly famous. Scientific circles there had given his modest statement far greater attention than it had received in America. He was requested to write a detailed scientific account of his vital share in the discovery for the Paris Medical Society. Wells complied, and the facts were so much in his favour that the story now attracted attention not only in Paris but in the United States.

Morton and Jackson now found themselves obliged to make common cause against Wells. Both hurled lies and slander at him and asserted that laughing gas was not an anaesthetic at all. It was in attempting to refute these attacks that Wells embarked on those dangerous comparative experiments upon himself, with laughing gas, ether and chloroform, which proved to be his doom.

Indeed, a dark doom hung over all three of the fortunate unfortunates who gave anaesthesia to the world. Morton ruined himself financially in the "ether war," which lasted for many years. When ether anaesthesia was declared public property, and his patent annulled, Morton cast himself in the role of a cheated man. He mobilized great numbers of lawyers, politicians and other backers to organize a campaign aimed at Congress itself. Morton demanded sole credit, and government recognition of his claim; Congress in addition was asked to give him a grant of one hundred thousand dollars in compensation for the supposed sacrifices which he had made as the discoverer of anaesthesia. Morton abandoned his dental practice to pursue the struggle: the fight for "his cause" became an obsession with him.

Soon he bested Jackson, who had not his financial backing; and in 1852 Congress seemed ready to award him the hundred-thousand-dollar prize. But at this point Truman Smith, the Senator from Wells's state, Connecticut, introduced into the debate Wells's forgotten account of his work. Ten years of ugly contention ensued during which Morton and his assistants tried to bribe Riggs, the witness of Wells's first experiment upon himself. Riggs replied that his integrity was not for sale. After Wells's death, Morton had also offered to split the hundred thousand dollars with Mrs. Wells if her husband's claims were dropped. Mrs. Wells replied that she sought only recognition for her husband.

Finally Morton's claims were rejected by Congress, and the whole matter was turned over to the courts. The case of Jackson was similarly treated.

Yet this was not the end of the matter. Morton's obsession was already beginning to verge dangerously on paranoia. In 1863 Congress was asked to grant him the larger sum of two hundred thousand dollars. The movement was voted down.

Morton continued to struggle for five years more, hanging about the corridors of Congress as a petitioner. In the middle of July 1868 he went from Washington to New York in a state of utter disintegration. Doctors who were called in to attend him thought his condition critical, and ordered bed rest. As soon as they left Morton's hotel, he dressed, took a carriage, and drove himself up Broadway. He drove the horse at a gallop through Central Park. Apparently burning with fever, he stopped in the park, ran to the lake, and cooled his face in the water. Then he ran back to the carriage, drove on for a while, jumped out again, and collapsed unconscious. He was taken to St. Luke's Hospital, where he died, aged only forty-eight.

Jackson, his deadliest enemy, outlived him by many years. But his reason was overpowered at last by latent delusions of grandeur. The last seven years of his life were spent under restraint in McLean Asylum in Somerville, a suburb of Boston.

Horace Wells had ended his own life long before this. I was in Edinburgh when the first news of his death reached me. After witnessing Morton's first demonstration of anaesthesia I had realized that the time for my voyage to Europe had arrived. Determined to be on hand to witness the conquest of Europe by "our discovery," I had sailed as soon as

possible. A large bequest from my father had now made it possible for me to pursue a dream of mine—to write the history of surgery in my lifetime.

When I returned to America I questioned everyone who might have been a witness to the events preceding Wells's death. I examined every newspaper item and letter which might clarify the obscurities. What follows is, to the best of my knowledge, an authentic narrative.

In January 1848 Horace Wells went to New York alone and rented an office at 120 Chambers Street. There he gave free instruction to doctors in the use of chloroform, laughing gas and ether. Meanwhile, he experimented upon himself with chloroform to determine favourable methods for the use of this new anaesthetic.

On the night of January 21 Horace Wells was arraigned before a magistrate in New York, charged with having thrown vitriol at two women on Broadway, burning the neck of one of them. In court, he did not deny the charge, but babbled wildly about his dispute with Dr. Morton. At first he could recall nothing up to the moment when he found himself in his cell. Under repeated questioning, however, he was finally able to make a confused statement about seeing a young man steal up to a girl on Broadway and throw vitriol on her. At this point, Wells broke down hysterically. The judge, moved to sympathy, gave him permission to go home, accompanied by a policeman, to fetch some toilet articles.

The attendant who opened the door of Wells's cell two mornings later, January 23, was horrified by what he found.

Wells was in a half-sitting position on the cot. A handkerchief held in place by his tightly pulled-down hat, covered his face. Inside the handkerchief was tucked another, folded, and wet with chloroform from a bottle on the floor. Wells's stiff right hand still held a razor with which he had cut the artery in his left leg.

There were two letters lying beside the dead man. One contained the explanation which he had been unable to give in court. "I had during the week been in the constant practice of inhaling chloroform and on Friday evening last I lost consciousness. On coming out of the stupor I was exhilarated beyond measure; seeing the vial of acid I seized it and rushed into the street and threw it at two females. My character, which I have ever prized above everything else, is gone. My dear, dear wife

and child, how they will suffer. I cannot proceed. My brain is on fire. The instrument of my destruction was obtained when the officer who had me in charge kindly permitted me to go to my room yesterday."

The letter to his wife was brief:

"I feel that I am fast becoming a deranged man. . . . I cannot live and keep my reason, and on this account God will forgive the deed. . . . Farewell."

Wells was not, as he imagined, insane; he was merely an unwitting



Dr. Horace Wells, 1815–1848

addict to narcotic gases. We know nowadays that their frequent use will destroy memory and will, and increase suggestibility. Under the influence of the drug, Wells seems to have repeated an act he had seen a stranger perform three days earlier. A modern doctor could have reassured him, and cured him.

When Wells chloroformed himself and then inflicted the fatal wound, he was committing probably the first suicide under anaesthesia in history. He died under the auspices of the blessing that he himself had given to the world.

London and Edinburgh

SHORTLY after Morton's first successful demonstration, I had landed in England to find that the news of ether anaesthesia had preceded me there. Dr. Jacob Bigelow, father of Dr. Warren's assistant, Henry Bigelow, had written to an English friend, Dr. Francis Boott, and enclosed an article on the analgesic use of ether which his son had published on November 18 in the Boston *Daily Advertiser*. Dr. Boott had immediately had the almost incredible news checked in a successful dental experiment. He had then dispatched Bigelow's account to Robert Liston, the celebrated Professor of Clinical Surgery at University College in London.

Liston was known as the coarsest, vainest, most cantankerous surgeon in England and Scotland. I had heard that he would attend the lectures of his great rival, James Syme, carrying the skull of an ape in order to impress the students with the similarity between Syme's head and the anthropoid's. His great renown, however, was for his daring, skilful surgery. His operations were measured in seconds rather than minutes, and it was said that he united the strength of a bear with the adroitness of a juggler.

At Liston's invitation I was present in the bitter-cold operating-theatre of University College on Monday, December 21, 1846. The excitement was intense, for since early morning word had gone round that Liston intended to try an unusual experiment. Some talked of American wizardry, some of American quackery. The stands were jammed with doctors and students.

At two-fifteen the door opened at last, and Liston, accompanied by two other men, strode in, tall and vigorous, his face framed in whiskers. Looking at him I could believe the reports that he held the scalpel between his teeth when he needed both hands to tie a blood vessel—he had learned this while watching the master butchers in his native Scotland.

Now he went up to the operating-table. "Are you ready, Mr. Squire?" he asked a young man at his side. Squire, an apothecary's nephew who had developed an inhaler for him overnight, nodded. Liston turned to Ransome, the resident surgeon, who had assembled the instruments and drawn several freshly waxed ligature threads, which were used to

tie up arteries, through a buttonhole in his coat. "Ready, Mr. Ransome?"

"Yes, sir."

"We are going to try a Yankee dodge today, gentlemen, for making men insensible. . . ." Liston's powerful voice filled the room. Attendants carried in a man named Frederick Churchill whose leg, infected by Liston's hands and instruments in a previous operation, was to be amputated, and laid him on the operating-table. Churchill wept and resisted as Squire thrust the mouthpiece of the inhaler between his lips and placed a clamp on his nose. When Squire ordered him to breathe, Churchill tried to obey, but began coughing so convulsively that he blew the mouthpiece away.

For a moment I feared America's discovery would be laughed at. I could already hear behind me a few low-voiced jeers. Squire's face was bathed in perspiration, despite the cold. Another assistant, Mr. Cadge, came over to help him while Liston waited, face expressionless. Once again Churchill breathed and coughed, but this time Squire held the tube forcibly in his mouth. I was close enough to note the tormented expression in Churchill's eyes. Then suddenly his head sank to the side and his body relaxed.

There was dead silence. Liston broke it. "Take the artery, Mr. Cadge. Now, gentlemen, time me."

I saw the students and doctors in the stands take out watches. Liston's scalpel flashed forward, and a few seconds later the dresser handed him a saw. Liston made half a dozen strokes, and Ransome tossed the amputated leg into the sawdust beside the table.

"Twenty-eight seconds," Squire whispered. The benches were very still.

Churchill did not stir until the moment Liston completed the bandaging. Then he opened his eyes. "When are you going to begin?" he cried. "Take me back, I can't go through with it."

Silently, Liston signed to one of the assistants. The man raised the amputated leg from the floor.

Churchill closed his eyes.

Liston looked round the circle. "This Yankee dodge, gentlemen, beats mesmerism hollow," he growled.

This leg amputation under ether anaesthesia performed by Robert Liston was the first painless operation in Europe. It opened the way for

the triumphal march of ether through Great Britain, Germany, Austria, France, Switzerland, Italy, Russia. By the time I finally crossed to the Continent at the end of January, I had difficulty even in following the course of that triumphal march and visiting all the pioneers in the use of ether in Europe.

ONE DAY before my departure for the Continent I was sitting before the fire-place in the lobby of my London hotel, leafing through a newspaper. I started as I came across a dispatch from Edinburgh headed: "A delivery without pain." I reconstruct it here:

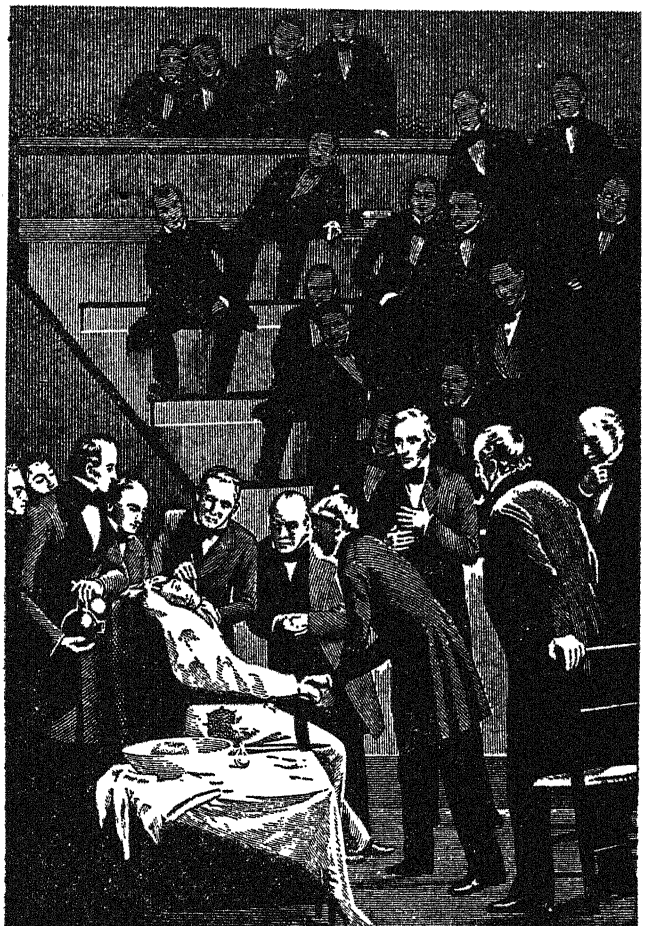
"On January 19 Dr. James Young Simpson, the well-known professor of midwifery at Edinburgh, aided a lady of this locality to bring forth a child without pain by applying the pain-destroying properties of ether. We understand this to be the first painless delivery in the history of the world. . . ."

I instantly decided to postpone my departure for France and instead to go to Edinburgh the next morning to look up Simpson. On the twenty-sixth, having been granted an interview, I stood for the first time at the door of Number 52 Queen Street, a large but plain-looking house where Simpson resided with his family.

He was standing by his desk as I was shown into the room—a rather short, massive man whose geniality did not conceal the fighting nature which had helped him work his way up from a barefoot baker's boy to his present eminence. He was obviously obsessed with his discovery, for he began to speak of it immediately. Later I learned that during his operations he had suffered so acutely from the cries of his patients that for years he had tried every imaginable means of relieving pain, including mesmerism.

"The newspaper was right," he said, "it was the first painless delivery. The idea of applying ether in deliveries was fairly obvious. The difficulty was not knowing whether ether would merely dispel the pain of labour, or whether it would also stop the muscular contractions essential to delivery. I had to wait for a case in which labour was proving ineffectual and I could chance arresting it."

He broke off. "Let us have tea," he said, pulling at a bell cord. "Jessie will bring it." Simpson laughed cheerily. "Jessie is my wife," he explained. "I married her, happily, right at the crisis of my career, when



Typical Victorian Operating-room—Dr. Warren of Massachusetts General Hospital, in Boston, performing first operation under ether. Dr. Morton holding inhaler on left. Dr. Liston, of London, was the first to use anaesthesia in Europe.

the wise heads of our venerable university were very loath to make me professor, especially of so disreputable a branch of medicine as women's diseases. You know what my colleague, Dr. Syme, calls me—a 'vulgar male midwife.'

"Now to return to the case," he went on. "At five o'clock in the afternoon on January 19 Dr. Figg, one of our local practitioners, called me in for consultation on a woman with an unusually narrow pelvis. Figg was in despair. The infant's large head was blocking the genital canal and would not move forward. A natural delivery would not be possible; the only chance to save the baby would be to turn it. As I listened to the woman's screams, the idea of trying ether as an analgesic gained stronger and stronger hold upon me. I could relieve the mother's agonies, and would obtain the answer to the crucial question of the effect of ether upon delivery. When by nine o'clock the infant's head had not moved forward a fraction of an inch, I resorted to ether.

"After a short time the patient's screams ceased and she breathed calmly. I cannot describe the exultation I felt when I saw that the ether had dulled the pain, but had not had the slightest influence upon the progress of the labour. Turning the infant and successful delivery was a matter of twenty minutes; we administered doses of ether from time to time. Unfortunately, the infant had suffered so severely that it expired after taking only a few breaths. However, I have since applied ether in two cases of completely normal birth, and it in no wise hampered the natural course of labour. Oh, Jessie," he broke off again, "here is our young friend from overseas; he has a thirst for knowledge like all Yankees."

He rose with that warm smile I later came to know well. As I too stood up and turned round, I saw a fine-looking young woman with an intelligent, kindly expression. "I did not mean to disturb you," she said, setting down the tea tray.

"You could never disturb me," Simpson said.

While his wife poured the tea, he continued: "Ether has several faults. It is effective only in large quantities, and it irritates the lungs, so that the patient often coughs violently upon awakening. This is not good after a delivery. I intend to experiment until I discover some substance superior to it for use in labour."

Jessie Simpson had been listening with a flicker of amusement in her

eyes. "You can have no conception of how we spend our evenings," she said. "The entire family sits round the dining-room table inhaling chemical vapours and waiting to see whether we fall unconscious to the floor."

It was during just such an experiment a little more than nine months later, on the night of November 4, 1847, that Simpson discovered the analgesic properties of chloroform. This volatile substance, formed by the action of chlorinated lime on ethyl alcohol, had been produced sixteen years before by an American, Samuel Guthrie of Sackets Harbour, New York, almost simultaneously with its discovery in Germany and France. It was occasionally used as an aid in relieving asthma.

The first news of Simpson's feat reached me in Berlin, where I had gone hoping to see the great plastic surgeon, Dieffenbach, operate on etherized patients. It was not until ten weeks later that I returned to Edinburgh and again called at 52 Queen Street.

Simpson was beaming when he received me. He had no doubt, he said, that he had discovered an anaesthetic far superior to ether. It did not cause spasmodic coughing. It took effect far more quickly than ether and far less of it sufficed.

I was then made to smell a bottle of the new anaesthetic. I sniffed cautiously at it. For the first time I inhaled that peculiar odour of chloroform which I was to encounter for decades in operating-rooms all over the world. It reminded me of the smell of sweet fruit.

On my departure, Matthew Duncan, Simpson's junior assistant, accompanied me part of the way.

"You must have heard about the battle here in Edinburgh over chloroform, and especially over its use for painless childbirth," he said as we walked. "Naturally, Simpson's and my own interest in chloroform is primarily for its applicability in confinements. Two months ago we tested chloroform on a patient whose previous delivery had been an affair of three days. The infant was being washed by the nurse in another room when the mother awoke. She said that she had slept comfortably and felt strengthened for the work before her. 'I am afraid my sleep has stopped the pains,' she added. Simpson laughed and called to the nurse to bring in the child. But it was some time before he could convince the astonished mother that her labour was over and the child was her really

own baby. Since then we have witnesed the same triumph dozens of times."

We came to a halt at the street corner where our ways parted.

"But how is it that such a storm of indignation has been aroused over chloroform?" I asked. "Professor Simpson carried out the first painless birth with the aid of ether more than a year ago. If there were going to be violent opposition, I should think it would have broken out then."

"Deliveries under ether were experiments; Simpson himself considered them merely that, and far from ideal. But since the discovery of chloroform Simpson has come out forcefully for universal painless birth. And that has stirred up a hornets' nest. Chloroform and painless birth are now virtually synonymous."

"I have heard it said that chloroform poisons the blood stream of the unborn child," I commented.

"Sheer nonsense," Duncan said. "The opposition is a question of morality and religion; its principal ammunition is drawn from the Bible. You know, Genesis 3, 16: . . . *in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children.* This is taken to mean that the Almighty placed a ban on painless childbirth, and therefore on chloroform."

"But they cannot hold up progress with such quotations!"

"It would not be the first time," replied Duncan. "However, Simpson has a rival quotation, Genesis 2, 21: *And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof.* Proof that God Himself practised anaesthesia, says Simpson. But the struggle is only beginning. The high clergy are already speaking of chloroform as a 'fruit of the Devil' But now God-speed, and good night. You will be catching cold if we stand here longer."

SHORTLY after this conversation with Duncan I returned to New York. In Edinburgh the controversy over chloroform continued to rage; but I witnessed its victory in America. For a time chloroform drove ether completely from the field, only to yield ground to it later. Finally, on April 7, 1853, a sensational news item from London altered the situation in both England and Scotland. Queen Victoria, then thirty-four years old, had just given birth in Buckingham Palace to her fourth son, Prince Leopold, Duke of Albany. A casual sentence in several of the

accounts stated that John Snow, the first London "specialist in anaesthesia," had, at the request of the Queen and the Prince Consort, placed Victoria under chloroform anaesthesia, and that the delivery had then been effected painlessly and without the slightest complication.

Later I received a letter from Duncan. He wrote that childbirth under chloroform had overnight become the fashion in Great Britain. The royal confinement had won the day for Simpson.

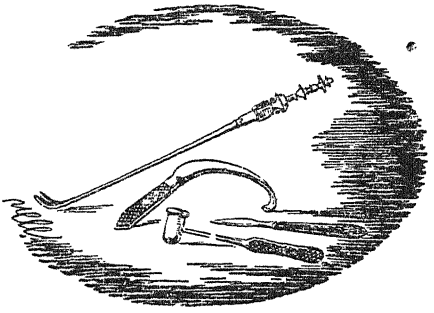
The following year, I called upon the anaesthetist, John Snow, at his cell-like bachelor flat in London. When he was unexpectedly summoned by the Prince Consort, he had already experimented for seven years with anaesthesia, especially with chloroform. Snow was then thirty-eight years old, a reticent eccentric, apparently suffering from tuberculosis. He had for a long time been a doctor virtually without patients. But when I saw him in 1854, the foremost ladies in British society were wild to be anaesthetized by him.

As a result of his studies he had developed a method of intermittent anaesthesia. Instead of fully anaesthetizing the woman in labour, he allowed her to inhale only a small quantity of chloroform at the beginning of a labour pain. He would then administer it again at successive pains. This was the method he used on the Queen.

Albert, the Prince Consort, Snow told me, had proved to be unusually well informed. He had read Snow's papers on anaesthesia, and had asked innumerable questions before he requested the physician to hold himself in readiness for the Queen's confinement. It was Albert and his close friend, the German doctor Baron Stockmar, both enthusiastic about scientific progress, who had instigated the introduction of chloroform into the Queen's lying-in chamber. In Albert's case, of course, another motive was his deep love for his wife. James Clark, the Queen's personal physician, refused to endorse the Prince's decision; he was retained only because of Victoria's stubborn attachment to him.

On the morning of April 7, 1853, in the presence of Drs. Clark, Locock and Fergusson, John Snow nervously placed a handkerchief soaked in "approximately thirty drops" of chloroform over the Queen's mouth and nose. To his great relief, she responded at once to the anaesthetic. Some fifteen more times Snow applied the handkerchief. After a tense fifty-three minutes Prince Leopold was born, without the slightest complication and without any expression of pain on the part of the Queen.

FEVER



Instruments Used in Lithotomy Operation

Stones

In point of time, the fantastic prelude to the story of my bladder-stones took place almost eight years after the discovery of anaesthesia. But in actuality it belongs to the prehistoric age of surgery. The episode began on March 3, 1854, in the small Indian city of Khanpur. I had gone to India to study "ancient Hindu" surgery, which I had heard romantically extolled in Europe.

That March 3 was extremely hot. Nevertheless, I shivered. Though I had been warned that people mysteriously fell ill after watching him operate, I had been taken to see Mukerji, the "lithotomist"—cutter for stones—of Khanpur. On the floor of his filthy hovel, Mukerji was operating on a screaming Indian boy for a bladder-stone, an ailment which in those days of monotonous diet was everywhere common, even in youth.

The boy's limbs stiffened in the iron grip of the half-naked assistant who held him down. Mukerji's withered old face remained expressionless. Holding his knife between the child's thighs, he thrust it through the perineum and into the bladder with a swift stroke. As he drew it out, the boy dashed his head back and forth. Mukerji then forced his

forefinger into the incision and felt for the stone in the bladder. At the same time his other fist pressed from above against the tormented boy's groin. He was forcing the stone towards the finger in the incision. The boy's shrill screams filled the hut. Suddenly Mukerji drew out his finger and reached for a long, thin forceps which lay in the dirt. He squeezed it through the incision, pressed his left hand once more against the child's groin and closed the forceps. There was a feeble crunching sound. Then Mukerji pulled and, raising the forceps, held out a reddish-yellow bladder-stone perhaps three-quarters of an inch wide and slightly more than an inch long.

For a few seconds there was a terrifying silence in the closeness of the hut. Mukerji did not try to stanch the blood from the incision. He applied no bandage. He merely signed to his assistants. They pressed the boy's thighs together, and bound them tightly with two ropes, and stretched the child, obviously exhausted with suffering, on the floor. At that moment I felt Dr. Lala Rai gently gripping my arm. "It is better we go," he whispered. "They don't like white doctors to be present."

Rai was one of the few young Indians who at that time had received medical and surgical training in England. When I had spoken to him of my desire to learn about the ancient Hindu medicine, he had proposed that we visit Mukerji, to whom sufferers from bladder-stone came from all over India. "What will be done for the boy now?" I asked as we walked towards our carriage.

"He will be left to the care of nature," Rai replied fatalistically. "Half of Mukerji's patients survive; and anyone who has the choice of dying from bladder-stone or taking a chance on being among the half who recover"

He broke off as we took our seats in the carriage. Then his matter-of-fact tone yielded to a mounting pride in his compatriot. "How is the practice of lithotomy in Europe any different?" he asked. "Anaesthesia! Fine. But otherwise? In London two years ago I saw intestines slit open by mistake, lacerated prostate glands, and fistulas in the wound channel. And how many surgery patients die of pyaemia in the greatest hospitals in Europe? Mukerji knows nothing but the teachings of his forefathers. I think his accomplishments are amazing. Don't you agree?"

"Oh, of course," I agreed, and said no more. I reflected that the Roman physician Celsus, who had been the first to write of lithotomy in detail,

might have been Mukerji's teacher. In spite of the passage of eighteen hundred years, his recommendations corresponded almost exactly with Mukerji's practice. My fanciful hopes about Indian surgery had been quickly dashed. I had to admit, however, that as far as European operative technique was concerned Rai had come very close to the truth. After the fifteenth century a few improvements had been made in lithotomy instruments and in a slight extension of the incision, but that was all.

It was useless to ask, in 1854, why the bladder was not opened from above, from the abdomen. After all, everyone knew that the top side of the bladder was more or less covered by a dangling fold of the peritoneum—the membrane that lines the abdominal walls. Experience with war wounds over the centuries had proved that injury to the peritoneum was usually fatal and dread of peritonitis still dominated the surgeons of the world.

I bade Rai good-bye in front of the deceptively splendid façade of the Civil and Military Hotel, where I had taken a couple of wretched, rat-infested rooms. That evening, feeling quite exhausted, I went to bed early. As I put out the lamp and turned on my side, I felt an unfamiliar pain in my right hip. It passed away quickly, but I waited in vain for sleep. I seemed to hear again the child's penetrating screams as Mukerji operated. They went on and on in my mind. I felt that they were a ghastly symbol of the sufferings of thousands of years, torments which had not yet been overcome, despite the childish optimism I had been feeling about surgery ever since witnessing the miracle of anaesthesia.

It may be that during the first few hours of that night I already had fever. At any rate I shivered as I reflected that for century on century stones in the bladder had remained murderous, and their surgical removal a hazardous ordeal. I found myself prey to those fears so familiar to every young doctor who is dealing constantly with diseases. Recalling that stabbing pain I had felt earlier, I remembered having read that bladder-stones could result from protracted attacks of diarrhoea with its consequent dehydration. During the whole voyage from Plymouth to Bombay I had suffered from diarrhoea because of the foul drinking water. I lay motionless, no longer daring to stir. Then I called myself an hysteric and finally dropped off into an uneasy sleep.

How long it lasted, I do not know. A stabbing pain in the pelvis suddenly made my whole body heave up. At the same time I felt so violent

a need to empty my bladder that I jumped out of bed. Instantly, I doubled up with still greater pain, and sank to my knees beside the bed. I called hoarsely for the hall porter. Nothing stirred but the rats. At last I groped my way through the darkness, bent almost double, both hands pressed against my abdomen.

All night long I staggered unsteadily in and out, lying down cautiously for a few minutes, avoiding hasty movements. I knew I was suffering the pains of bladder-stone that hundreds of thousands had suffered before me since the days of the cave men. I took opium. Then I tried chloral. Towards morning, in utter despair, I reached for my bottle of ether. At that very moment a tremendous onslaught of pain drove me to go out once more. Shortly afterwards, I felt as if my uretha were being cut in two. Then I felt a sudden diminution of the pain, stumbled back to my bed, and sank into a more or less drugged sleep.

When I awoke it was late in the forenoon. I recognized Dr. Rai's pale, yellowish face above my bed. "Are you ill?" he asked.

"I'm afraid I have a bladder-stone," I burst out hoarsely.

It seemed to me that Rai's expression held a hint of triumph and superstitious exaltation. The veneer of "European civilization" had vanished. "Mukerji," he said. "Mukerji heals and makes ill."

Later I spent a great deal of time vainly trying to account for the mysterious coincidence of having witnessed Mukerji's operation before a sudden attack of bladder-stone. But now Rai's words and look only aroused fear in me. Still hovering between sleep and waking, I asked: "Where is the nearest English doctor?"

"The best person is Mukerji," Rai said. "No English doctor knows how to treat stones, not even Dr. Irving in Lucknow."

All I heard was "Irving in Lucknow," and to this I clung.

LUCKNOW was at that time a charming city with green gardens and parks. By the time I reached there I was thoroughly exhausted, but no longer suffering pronounced pain.

Dr. Irving, who came to see me at my comfortable hotel soon after my arrival, was already in his sixties, a coarse, powerful man, like most surgeons of that era. I shuddered involuntarily at the thought of those strong red hands examining me. But when Irving spoke, his deliberate manner had a curiously reassuring effect.

"There seems to be no doubt that you passed a small stone," he said after hearing my description. "There may be more stones in the bladder. I must try to make certain. . . ."

Nowadays X-rays and the delicate cystoscope tube with its electric light, combined with local anaesthesia and asepsis, have enabled us to inspect the interior of the bladder virtually without risk or pain. But all that Irving had for his examination were his fingers and a crude metal catheter, a hollow tube used for distending bodily passages. No one had any idea of the germs that were introduced into the bladder with these unsterile instruments, which were forced into the bladder through the urethra, the canal through which urine is discharged from the body. The surgeon had no way to judge whether a stone was present in the bladder except by feeling about with the end of the catheter, or with the aid of a probe, until contact was made.

Today I forgive Irving all the tortures he inflicted upon me, including the attack of fever which I suffered after the examination—the consequence of an infection. Like the mass of physicians all over the world, Irving did not know better. When he at last withdrew the catheter, wiped it off on a rag, and tossed it into his instrument box between a pair of rusty dental forceps, he looked gravely at me. "Well," he said, "you have two sizeable stones."

"What do you suggest?" I asked despairingly.

"Well," he repeated, "the stones will probably give you no trouble until they become enlarged, in perhaps six months. I'd suggest you go to Paris as quickly as possible, and consult Dr. Civiale. He has developed lithotrity, a bloodless and almost painless method of breaking up these stones."

Fortunately, my infection was a slight one and, following Dr. Irving's advice, I left India on March 10. After a speedy voyage on the S.S. *Calcutta,* I arrived in London on May 5, 1854. In April I had again had a light attack of bladder pain, and since then had been pursued by the terror of suffering a really severe onset before I could reach Civiale. When young doctors who are acquainted with their own disease find themselves in such situations, their state of mind is far more terrible than that of ordinary patients who are shielded by their ignorance and their faith in the so-called "art of medicine."

However, I felt relieved merely to be setting foot on English soil. My

relief was still greater when I found at my hotel a letter from James Syme of Edinburgh, to whom I had written from Lucknow. The envelope contained a letter to Dr. Henry Thompson, Wimpole Street, London, and a note: "This is your man."

I looked up "my man" that same afternoon. Thompson's world-wide fame as a urologist would not come for another ten years. At the time of our meeting he was barely thirty-five, very slim and agile, with regular, rather handsome features, and hands of a sensitivity rare among the muscular surgeons of the day.

"Syme tells me the doctor in Lucknow recommended Civiale to you," he said, looking up from the letter. "I gather you merely desire my opinion of his method. Since studying under him in Paris, I have been practising his method in London. But, if one can, one ought to go directly to the master rather than to his disciple." He paused a moment. "Civiale is understandably vain and full of nationalistic pride. He regards every foreigner who comes to him as a confirmation of the fact that true merit in surgery is only to be found in France, and that he remains the master of masters. So if you would like a letter from me"

"That would be very kind of you," I said.

As he took up his pen, he said: "If, as you say, your condition during the voyage was tolerable, you do not now require an examination with probe and catheter and can spare yourself the attack of fever that is its inevitable accompaniment." A generation later, towards the end of his life, Thompson had learned, like other doctors, that fever and inflammation were by no means inevitable, that they were simply the consequences of unclean hands and instruments. But in those days Thompson, too, casually wiped his knife or probe on the tails of his coat after use.

He blotted the ink on the note he had written but, before passing it across the table, he paused to tell me that he thought it probable that the Munich physician Gruithuisen had actually been the spiritual father of Civiale's method. At the beginning of the nineteenth century Gruithuisen had pursued an old dream that it might be possible to dissolve bladder-stones by chemical solvents. Doctors had tried strange concoctions of such things as lye and pigeon dung, tartar salts and vitriol. In 1739 the British government had paid five thousand pounds to one Joanna Stephens for a formula which Sir Robert Walpole and his brother Horace believed had

cured them of their stones. The medicine proved completely ineffective; it was found to consist of egg-shells, snails and soap.

Gruithuisen, knowing that there were various types of stones, had hit on the idea of breaking off small pieces of the stone within the bladder in order to extract these and determine which solvent to use. His paper on experiments he had made with cadavers appeared in 1813.

When Jean Civiale took up Gruithuisen's experiments, he was twenty-six years old and had not yet completed his medical studies. But he had become obsessed by the desire to replace the cruel operation of lithotomy by a new, bloodless method. For five years, Thompson told me, Civiale experimented on himself, and on cadavers. He did not know that at this same time two other young physicians in Paris were studying the same problem: Amussat and Leroy d'Etiolles. Civiale would always claim to be the sole inventor of his operation and destiny accorded him the laurels.

After numerous further experiments, and many detours and disappointments, Civiale produced an instrument consisting of a very thin catheter tube with a transmission rod, adjusting screw, and three-pronged forceps within it. The tube was introduced into the bladder; then, by means of rod and screw, the forceps was made to unfold so that the bladder-stone could be grasped. If it was impossible to crush it by screwing the claws of the forceps together, the stone was shattered by the cutting edge of a drill-bit which was applied through the tube.

By 1824 Civiale was so sure of his method that he invited representatives of the Royal Academy of Sciences in Paris to witness the lithotrity of a stone in a thirty-two-year-old patient. Before their eyes Civiale proved that his idea was feasible. During this first operation he broke up about one-third of the stone without causing the patient any pain and finished the work in two further operations. The patient came on foot to each session and left the doctor's house without help at the finish of each operation.

"You will see that breaking up a stone by Civiale's method is only a minor operation," Thompson said now. As I took the note he gave me, and rose to bid him good-bye, he waved his hand towards a copy of a painting by Rembrandt which a Dutch patient had recently given him. The picture showed a young man, Jan de Doot, with a scalpel in his right hand and a large bladder-stone set in gold in his upraised left hand. Thompson described how Jan de Doot, tormented by frightful pain from

a bladder-stone, had one day in 1651 sent his wife to the fish market and in her absence cut into his own bladder through the perineum. He enlarged the wound with two fingers, dug out the stone—and did not die.

"But how was it possible?" I asked. "How could he . . . ?"

Thompson placed his hand on the portrait of Jan de Doot. "How?" he repeated. "The answer should be clear to you." His bright eyes under their heavy brows fixed themselves upon me. "Think of your night in Khanpur," he said. "Imagine that your life consisted of nothing but such nights in an age when narcotics were not to be had and no Civiale either. What would you have done? Pain and the will to live reign supreme in this world."

Two DAYS later I was cruelly reminded of the truth of Thompson's words. As I set foot on the platform of the railway station in Paris, I suffered a real attack of stone-colic for the first time since Khanpur. It was only with the greatest self-control that I got through the customs examination and the carriage ride to the Grand Hôtel du Louvre without breaking into screams of pain. Then that fantastic night in the rat-hole at Khanpur was repeated here in this vast luxury hotel.

The following morning, kneeling at the desk, I wrote a letter to Civiale begging him to come to see me at once. Within an hour the servant who had taken the message returned. Civiale had left Paris and was not expected back for three days.

Three days of such suffering! Shaking with chills, I was in despair when the servant suggested Dr. Maisonneuve, the head surgeon of la Pitié Hospital, who happened to be in the hotel.

Maisonneuve turned up shortly afterwards—a short, thick-set man in his mid-fifties. Later I learned that other doctors called him "the assassin." He bombarded me with a torrent of words. Then an unusually long probe appeared in his hand. He worked with the ruthlessness and the speed of the pre-anaesthetic age. "A fragment of stone," he said after barely two minutes. "It has already worked its way a good distance. . . ."

I felt a frightful stabbing pain. Then Maisonneuve waved before me a pea-sized bit of stone held at the end of a long forceps. "You ought to have the stones removed surgically," he said. "I shall be operating at la Pitié tomorrow morning. Come and watch; you will be convinced that it is a simple matter."

He left me in a state of utter prostration. But the next morning I had recovered sufficiently to pay a visit to la Pitié, at that time one of the noted hospitals of Paris. It had been founded by Maria de' Medici in 1612 as an asylum for beggars, and was now a gloomy, neglected structure grimy with the soil of centuries.

The operating-room had obviously not been whitewashed or cleaned for ages. The benches and chairs were so filthy that the spectators, who were waiting near the casually cleaned bed which served as operating-table, preferred to stand. The windows were so low that anyone could peer in from outside.

In a few minutes Maisonneuve tramped in, followed by his assistants. His unwashed operating-coat was handed to him. From one of the buttonholes dangled catgut for tying blood vessels.

The first patient was an emaciated man in his sixties. He had, Maisonneuve announced in a loud, coarse voice, been suffering from stones for two years, and had at last decided to undergo operation. Lithotomy remained the one dependable recourse, in spite of all the preachments of certain doctors for other methods. Probably this was intended as a thrust at Civiale.

The patient, Maisonneuve declared, was in such a weakened condition that anaesthesia could not be risked. As he was saying this, one of the assistants thrust a folded rag between the patient's teeth, and gripped his shoulders. Two others raised his legs into the position for lithotomy. The old man was too weak to resist. He also seemed too feeble even to scream, and uttered only a gurgling groan when Maisonneuve, with the adroitness of a prestidigitator, thrust the grooved probe into the urethra and only a few seconds later drove his scalpel into the perineum.

Thoroughly sickened and appalled, I went out before the operation was over.

On May 23 I went to Necker Hospital to see Civiale, who had asked me to call on him there. I entered his room in a mood compounded of anxiety, curiosity and trust.

Civiale was a somewhat heavy-bodied man of medium height who looked younger than his sixty-two years. There was a dapper, urbane air about him; he looked less a doctor than a successful industrialist. Because of Thompson's note, he received me with the greatest affability. When I

mentioned that his fame had reached me as far away as India, he made no effort to conceal the pleasure this gave his vanity. He interrupted me with a heated attack on French physicians.

"In over thirty years I have treated thousands of patients," he burst out, "and yet every day I must fight anew for my method. Lisfranc, the predecessor of Maisonneuve—the two are a perfect pair—sneered at me and went on cutting up his victims. But in 1831 he got me to remove a stone of his. Whenever their own lives were concerned, they knew where to turn."

It was evident that Civiale was perpetually conscious of his rivals and enemies.

"I know quite well why they are all against me," he went on. "They cannot use my instruments. They are simple butchers; they utterly lack the sensitivity in their hands—in their hands. . . ." He came towards me and held out his hands. I could literally see them quivering with the sensitivity which enabled Civiale, as I shortly discovered for myself, to sense an obstacle in the dark recesses of the body before his instruments touched it.

Civiale examined me with extraordinary skill. Many years later I underwent an examination with the modern cystoscope, under local anaesthesia. The later one was almost the more trying.

"Your doctor in India is a fool," Civiale said. "It is not two stones you have there but one, shaped like two attached eggs." He returned to his desk. "I asked you to come here to the hospital," he said, "because I would not ask you to put yourself into my hands until you have seen how I work. I am prepared to give you a private showing of an operation."

We went into the operating-room, which by the hospital standards of those days could be called clean, although the operating-cot was dirty and Civiale himself put on a stained apron. The patient, a very sick-looking man of about forty, was laid on the bed.

"I shall not be using anaesthesia," Civiale said, "so that you may see how painless the operation is with my instruments."

In point of fact, the patient did not utter a sound while Civiale first filled his bladder with water and then introduced the catheter and the lithotrite, its pincers lying flat against one another. Then Civiale's hand suddenly flashed to the screw mechanism, and began turning it. "Now

I am gripping the stone," he whispered. "It is a relatively small one. I am crushing it. Do you hear it breaking?"

I did hear a dull, crunching, grinding sound.

"Now I open the instrument," Civiale murmured, turning the screw once more. He twirled the catheter, moving it back and forth. "Now I am grasping the rest of the stone," he went on. "Now I am crushing it. I open the instrument and turn it, to free it of the debris. . . . Now I draw it out. . . ."

The patient's white face twisted in a grimace for the first time. But Civiale was already holding the entire catheter in his hand. It was covered with a yellowish stony grit. Civiale handed it to an assistant, and introduced another, larger catheter through which he rinsed the fragments of stone from the bladder. Then he introduced a probe and felt about.

He straightened up and turned towards me. "The operation is over," he said with a note of solemnity. "The patient has been freed of his stone."

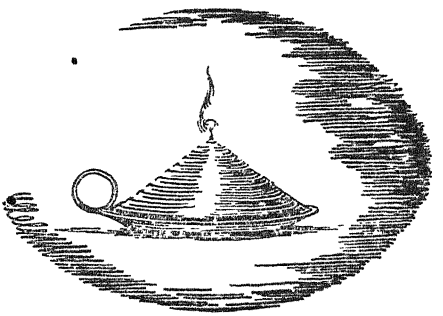
CIVIALE "operated" upon me in three sessions, and removed my stone entirely.

After each session I suffered the "inevitable" bouts of fever. A violent inflammation of the bladder lasting two weeks also fell into the category of inescapable "reactions of nature."

On June 20 I left Paris. I never saw Civiale again. Through my growing friendship with Thompson, however, I kept track of the Frenchman's career.

But that is another story, which culminated in a curious scene when Civiale, the teacher, and Thompson, the disciple, stood as rivals at the bedside of King Leopold I of Belgium, who was suffering acutely from stones. It was Thompson who saved the King and emerged as victor over his teacher.

Nevertheless Civiale's name was secure. Today, lithotomy "from above" has become, because of asepsis, both standard and safe, and the age-old terrors of "cutting for the stone" are forgotten. Nevertheless, Civiale's method has retained its place in certain cases. In the days of its discovery it was a beacon light glowing in a darkness of suffering and despair.



Florence Nightingale's Famous Lamp

Scutari

IN THE middle of October 1854—completely recovered and keen for new adventures—I read in London the dispatches William Howard Russell, the famous *Times* correspondent, sent back from the Crimean War, which was then raging. He reported horrible conditions in the army hospitals. No one seemed even to have remembered, he cabled, that old rags were needed for bandaging, and operating-tables and chloroform for operations.

His cables aroused great indignation in England. There was an outbreak of public meetings. The Secretary at War requested Florence Nightingale to assemble a group of nurses and sail for the main British hospital at Scutari, in Turkey. Many philanthropic Englishmen set out for the Crimea at their own expense, to try to alleviate conditions there. I joined them.

Since 1846 I had imagined that, once the barrier of pain was cleared, the conquests of surgery would be enormous. During the past eight years that faith had been shaken frequently; in those ghastly wards at Scutari I lost it for ever. I became convinced that, even with pain defeated, surgery was faced with a second formidable, age-old enemy. In fact, since the spread of anaesthesia this particular menace seemed to be growing mysteriously. In Scutari I was to witness its frightful power—whether called wound fever, pyaemia, septicaemia, erysipelas, gangrene, blood poisoning or, as we would now say, infection.

I arrived in Constantinople on November 20, 1854, with a supply of ether and chloroform in my luggage. As I entered a waiting bark, soon after, I could see the Turkish barracks at Scutari gleaming in the sunlight across the Bosphorus. They were serving as hospital for the British Expeditionary Corps. Anthony Hillary, a Constantinople businessman who had obtained permission for me to enter the hospital, was seeing me to my destination. Now he said: "You are visiting a first-class slaughterhouse. I am not going ashore. If you insist on contracting fever, typhus and cholera, you can do it alone."

"But I am only going to see the surgical wards," I said.

"They are all dying in the same filth," he replied. "And the more your surgical friends do for their wounds, the faster they die."

As our boat neared the Scutari shore, the hospital barracks changed from a shining castle to a gigantic dirty structure, from which the wind wafted an evil, penetrating odour. A similar odour rose from the ships which had come from the battleground and were everlastingly transferring litters of sick and wounded to the rowboats which would bring them to shore. Turkish workmen handed the litters up to the rickety wooden pier, and tipped the soldiers out on the muddy, garbage-strewn slope that led up to the barracks. Those who could still crawl crawled from this point up to the gateway. The rest waited for bearers.

"Enjoy yourself," Hillary shouted as I climbed on to the swaying pier. "Be careful!" He waved his hand towards a hand-cart laden with corpses which were just being tipped into a pit in front of the hospital. "I shall be back tomorrow noon."

My Turkish porters led me into one of the long wings of the barracks, set my bundles down in a corner and left me. I looked round at the damp, filth-smeared walls, then abandoned my luggage and groped my way down a dim, rat-infested passage. I found myself suddenly in a wider corridor. On the stone floor lay rows of men, half naked, only a few of them covered with coats, delirious, cursing, praying, their heads pillowed on boots or rags. In the next room there was at least a little straw on the floor, and several attendants. Everybody here had cholera, one of them told me, and if I didn't clear out fast I would have it too. He said he had not seen a doctor for a week.

I pressed on, and everywhere saw the same scenes. At last I came to a room where for the first time I saw patients lying on clean straw

pallets. Here I came upon a woman who was going from pallet to pallet with cups of port wine. She was dressed in an ugly, sack-like grey dress, a still uglier grey knitted jacket, and wore a white head covering. I guessed that she must be one of Florence Nightingale's nurses. I asked her where I could find an operating-room; her face was apprehensive as she listened to me. I did not understand her attitude until I later learned of the antagonism the doctors in Scutari had shown Florence Nightingale, whom they regarded as a troublesome intruder. She had been forced to rule her group of nurses with an iron hand, in order to give the doctors no basis for attacks.

The nurse finally replied that there was not a single operating-room or operating-table in the entire hospital. The surgeons were working in a large hall which was already crowded with wounded men. With a nervous motion she showed me the direction.

I made my way to the large, dimly lit ward she had indicated. In the centre of the hall the surgeons were at work. The wounded soldiers lay on planks which had been nailed to wooden horses. The floor was covered with newly operated-on patients, and Turks were constantly bringing in more wounded men from the ships. I stood stunned at the door. One of the doctors looked up between two operations and turned his sweaty, unshaven face towards me.

"Hey," he called, "if you're one of the T.G.s, don't stand about; make yourself useful."

I did not know that T.G. meant "travelling gentlemen"—the soldiers' bitter name for the philanthropic volunteers from England. When I did not move at once, the doctor called again: "Either lend a hand or I'll have you thrown out." Someone snorted with laughter. I made my way forward gingerly to the operating-stand. Unavoidably I stepped on a hand here, an arm there. Angry shouts and curses followed me. The surgeon was taking an iron splinter out of the patient's thigh, while an assistant held a chloroform-soaked old rag over the soldier's mouth and nose. I exclaimed: "Why, you are anaesthetizing! In London it was said"

The surgeon glared at me. "Those damned lying reporters," he snarled. He laid a much-used linen rag casually over the fresh incision. "Get to work. Finish bandaging this man. . . ."

The patient was lifted off the stand and laid on the stone floor. The

surgeon tossed me a bandage. "Next!" he called, sharpening his knife against his boot. I knelt silently beside the patient and bandaged him. As I finished the work, I heard the surgeon's voice over me: "Why, you know something about this business."

"Of course I do," I growled back. "I am Dr. Hartmann. I happen to be a surgeon, or as much of one as you are."

He held his scalpel poised. "My name is McGregor. Here, help me with the ligatures. This"—he indicated a dignified gentleman who was holding the patient's head—"is Mr. Sidney Osborne, a gentleman of the cloth, and a visitor like yourself. I hope you will prove as useful as he." Seconds later, caught up in the maelstrom of amputations, resections, removal of bullets, I was desperately attempting to defend my boast about my surgical experience.

We had been operating on shattered bodies for many hours, at the end by flickering candlelight, when McGregor at last laid down his knife. "Time for the rounds," he said hoarsely. "Come along, if you like. Mr. Osborne accompanies us."

Nowhere did I see any water for washing up. Later I learned that the allowance never exceeded a pint per person. I wiped my hands off on my clothes and followed McGregor and Osborne into an unlit corridor. Heavy breathing and gasped phrases from the men lying there sounded out of the darkness. At last an attendant sitting hunched near the entrance lit a lantern.

"Everything all right?" McGregor asked.

"Eighteen dead since this morning, sir," the attendant replied. He reeked of brandy. "A good dozen dying. The Lady talked with them. Since then they have been fairly quiet."

McGregor's expression hardened at the word "Lady." He took the lantern and moved on into a connecting hallway. "Could you now favour me with an explanation of why you are here?" he said.

I did so.

"You have seen that we're not short of chloroform," he growled. "Indeed, this is the first war in which operations have been performed under chloroform, yet never before have so many men died of wound fever. Just open your eyes, man. . . ."

He pushed open a heavy wooden door and turned to the attendant in charge. "Everything all right?"

"Twenty-two dead, sir," the attendant reported. "And over there those fellows have been calling for the pastor." Osborne, swaying with weariness, went over to kneel beside the dying men.

"Twenty-two dead," McGregor repeated. "Tomorrow there'll be another twenty-two. At this moment a hundred men on whom we've operated skilfully and painlessly are dying. Ever since we have used chloroform and have been able to cut deep and do a thorough job, wound fever has been on the increase."

He went along the rows of wounded men. One patient lay close beside the next. All had stinking bandages, sallow faces, sunken eyes, rapid, gasping breath—signs of the wound fever which was accepted in those days as pain had been up to eight years before: as a mysterious but necessary evil. The frightfulness of the scene was enough to banish all dreams of progress. The men among whom Oborne knelt praying had but a few hours to live.

"The next ward is full of erysipelas," McGregor said gloomily as we continued on. "It's impossible to help them."

Nevertheless he knocked on the dilapidated door. When it was opened, however, he choked back his horrible routine question, "Everything all right?" In the middle of the floor stood a lantern, and beside it a tea-kettle from which a tall, willowy woman was filling cups. She passed these on to two more women clothed in those unattractive grey sacks. The women went up to each pallet in turn, knelt beside it, raised the patient's head and held the cup to the man's lips. Although I had never seen Florence Nightingale before, I knew instantly this woman was "the Lady with the Lamp." I felt the fascination that emanated from her. She looked younger than her thirty-four years. Unlike her companions, she wore a black woollen dress with a small white collar. Her face under the rather close-cut brown hair looked delicate, no face, one would say, to meet these scenes of horror and death.

"These men have had nothing warm to eat or drink since yesterday," she said without preamble, in a voice that was firm beneath its gentleness. "We have been bringing them tea and red wine. I hope this meets with your approval, Dr. McGregor." Her eyes, which had in them the consciousness of a mission, were fixed upon the doctor with an oddly insistent coolness.

McGregor muttered a choking "Yes" and turned, obviously unable

to meet her eyes any longer, towards the attendant. "Nine dead," the man said. "Otherwise, everything is all right."

McGregor let the door slam behind him. "Gentle as a girl," he grumbled, with possibly a touch of admiration, "and hard as steel inside. But what's the use? Serving tea, hot soups, holding heads—that's all nonsense, here. The men die of wound fever with or without Miss Nightingale."

We went back the way we had come, past all the dirt and the moaning, feverish, dying men on the floor. Everywhere it was the same: fever, fever, fever, and death. I dropped down on the floor somewhere and fell asleep, utterly exhausted. In the morning I stood again for hours beside the plank operating-table while McGregor cut and probed.

At noon I staggered back to the pier. Hillary was waiting for me, but reserved any scornful comments. Yet he could not have realized what, for me, had been the direct effect of my visit. In one day at Scutari I had entirely lost my faith in the wonder-working power of anaesthesia. Surgery would remain a deadly thing, until a second terrible menace was overcome: sepsis.

The Caesarean Section

IT WAS twenty-two years after Scutari. But the scene, in San Matteo in Pavia, Italy, was a typical hospital of the pre-aseptic era. Neglected corridors and wards. Everywhere the odour of suppuration. Scarcely more than a whisper of new medical ideas had penetrated these ancient walls. Yet this was the theatre in which a young Italian woman named Julie Covallini and the surgeon Edoardo Porro played historic parts in a piece of surgical pioneering. Porro himself told me the little-known story many years after it happened. It cast a merciless light upon the surgeon's helplessness before so-called "surgical fever."

On April 27, 1876, twenty-five-year-old Julie Covallini trod heavily across the threshold of San Matteo to bring her first child into the world. In the surgical ward gangrene was raging. In the maternity wing lay cases of childbed fever. She murmured a prayer as she entered Porro's examining-room.

At this time Edoardo Porro, Professor of Obstetrics at Pavia, was

thirty-three years old. A thin, earnest man with pale, high forehead and heavy black beard, he had a natural kindliness. Before he examined Julie Covallini, he gazed with pity at the deformed hips of this young woman who had been undernourished in childhood, and who could not bear her child. She was already well beyond her time.

With bare hands, carelessly rinsed, Porro made the examination and measured Julie Covallini's narrow, oddly shaped pelvis. Then he stepped back to allow his assistants to conduct their own examinations, as was the custom. When they were finished, Porro told the woman not to worry. "The baby is alive," he said. "But babies often take their time. We must wait. . . ." He had to force himself to smile, but Julie Covallini was reassured. Then he and his assistants left the room. They all agreed that a Caesarean section must be undertaken. Since scarcely a single mother in recent decades had survived a Caesarean, the prognosis for the woman was clear. Perhaps the baby could be saved.

In 1876 Caesarean section was what it had been for centuries—an operation in all probability followed by death from shock, internal haemorrhage or peritonitis. The written traditions of many peoples—the ancient Rig-Veda of the Hindus, the Hebrew Talmud, the records of Greeks, Romans and Arabs—contain references to "birth by section." According to a doubtful legend, Julius Caesar was delivered by surgery—hence the name for the operation—but this is no proof that the Romans successfully practised Caesarean section on living mothers.

It is certain that the excision of living infants from dead mothers was known in the Middle Ages. The Catholic Church forbade the burial of a woman who had died in vain labour before an attempt had been made to cut the infant out of her dead body so that it could be baptized. Midwives were trained in this procedure. Later it was learned that the foetus in the mother's womb lived, at most, twenty minutes. Many of the older accounts, however, maintained that living infants had been "sectioned" after as long as twenty-four hours. Only one provision was necessary: the dead mother's mouth must be opened wide. It was actually believed that a child in the womb breathed through its mother's mouth!

In the Renaissance, with its new attitudes towards human life, accounts of Caesareans on living women began to appear, and in 1581 the first text-book on Caesarean section was published in Paris by François Rousset, surgeon to the Duke of Savoy. In cases of oversized infants, of

twins, of the child being dead, or of pronounced narrowness of the obstetric canal, Rousset advocated Caesarean section on living women. Not for thirty years would William Chamberlain invent the obstetrical forceps which would overcome some of these difficulties without surgery.

In order to perform a Caesarean section, Rousset recommended cutting open the womb, lifting out the infant and suturing the incision in the abdominal wall. The incision in the womb itself should not be sewed, he maintained, since the powerful womb muscles would close it of their own accord.

It was soon discovered that Rousset himself had never carried out a Caesarean section—in fact, had probably never witnessed one—but for centuries his book remained the only existing text-book, and many doctors must have followed it in desperation. Since Caesarean section was so commonly fatal, however, it fell into disrepute and many attempts were made to find other ways of solving the problem of a narrow pelvis.

In the eighteenth century the British physician Samuel Merriman experimented with inducing birth before the infant reached full size by hot baths, enemas and electric currents. James Lucas, of Leeds, England, hoped to keep the infant's skull soft by starvation diets and repeated bleedings, so that it could be forced more easily through the constricted passages. Each proposal was wilder and more desperate than the last. But all were prompted by the knowledge that a Caesarean almost always resulted in death.

The French surgeon Lebas, however, made a significant discovery. In the course of autopsies upon women who had died after Caesarean sections he discovered that the incision into the womb had not been closed by the womb muscles as Rousset had theorized. On the contrary, the incision gaped wide open. Cruel haemorrhages had in some cases killed the patient within a few hours. More often, however, fatal peritonitis had ensued. Lebas was the first surgeon to suspect the peril of infection from the incised womb, and to undertake to close it by sutures. But his few simple, knotted threads tore loose as soon as the after-pains convulsed the uterus; the wound gaped open as widely as ever. Lebas gave up. No one adopted his hints. As late as my own student days the text-books continued to repeat the obsolete doctrines of Rousset and mothers continued to die after Caesarean sections. The few exceptions seemed like inexplicable lucky accidents.

Yet how had Dr. Jesse Bennett in a wild section of Rockingham County, Virginia, on January 14, 1794, successfully delivered his own wife, Elizabeth, by a Caesarean? As he performed the operation with his wife fully conscious, this country doctor grimly declared, "This will be the first and the last time," and rendered her unfruitful. Why after this first Caesarean section in America did wife and child survive? And why had the second Caesarean operation in the United States—once more undertaken in the wilderness—also been successful? In a ramshackle earth-floored hut, by candlelight and with wretched instruments, John Lambert Richmond in 1827 delivered the child of a Negro woman whose pelvis was too narrow for normal birth. Mother and child had lived. Was this chance or fate? Or was there some principle here which governed the success or failure of a Caesarean section?

By the time Julie Covallini came to him, Edoardo Porro was one of the growing number of surgeons who were not content to accept chance as the explanation. Were the few successes due to unusual resistance on the part of the mother? Or had John Aitken, the Edinburgh surgeon, been right in laying the blame on poisons in the atmosphere which entered through the surgical wound? This seemed possible in view of the successful American cases which had taken place in a poison-free atmosphere, far from hospitals and cities. But there still were other ways by which these poisons might enter the abdominal cavity. Even in a normal delivery, once dilatation had taken place, the air had access to the uterus. And, apart from infection, there remained the problem of the fatal haemorrhages that so often followed a Caesarean.

Porro had studied the writings of Lebas. And he asked himself: Had not Lebas's findings been sound, after all? Had not that strange theoretician Rousset committed a terrible error in alleging that the uterus need not be sewed? For years Porro had revolved these questions in his mind. If the incised uterus was the source of the fatal contagion, how could the deadly substances within it be prevented from reaching the abdominal cavity? He, like Lebas, abandoned the idea of closing the wound in the uterus effectively.

The thought of the only alternative was, ultimately, inescapable. If there were no way to close the presumed source of fatal infection, should the uterus not be removed entirely?

Such a conclusion was indeed a grim one, for it meant irreparable

mutilation for the woman. But if the choice lay between that and death was there really any question? Each time Porro saw a woman die after a Caesarean section he knew that he had moved a little closer to making the decision. But certainly he did not know how close until Julie Covallini lay so pitiably before him.

On the morning of May 21, 1876, a nurse reported to Porro that the "Covallini girl's" first pains had begun. That afternoon, at twenty minutes to five, he stood over her, scalpel in hand. She lay under deep chloroform anaesthesia, on the old, stained, wooden operating-table which was then in use at San Matteo.

Two minutes later, Porro began the operation. He cut downward along the middle of the abdomen. With fingers wrapped in cloth, one of his assistants drew the edges of the scarcely bleeding wound far apart. Below the oval of the incision, and contracted by a labour pain, lay the uterus with the child inside.

Porro cut into the uterus. The musculature relaxed. The incision spread apart and at once began bleeding heavily from the uterine wall. Swiftly, Porro's right hand grasped the infant's left arm, then the shoulder. He worked the thinly haired little head through the wound. As he did so, the incision in the uterus tore at the upper end, and a vessel spurted blood. Porro worked faster. He pulled the whole body out through the incision. Then he cut the umbilical cord and handed a vigorous girl to one of the waiting nurses.

Porro's assistant tried to stem the bleeding while Porro removed the afterbirth. But the blood continued to bubble out from the incision in the uterus into the abdominal cavity. Porro drew the entire uterus, with its attached arteries, out through the abdominal incision, in order to work in a clearer field. He squeezed together the edges of the wound and kneaded the uterus to stimulate its muscles. If these contracted, they would press the edges of the incision so tightly together bleeding would stop. But the wound remained open and the blood continued to well forth.

For a few seconds Porro's nervous hands remained still. What else could he do to stop this bleeding? A suture to hold the incision together temporarily seemed hopeless in view of the irregular tear made in removing the baby. The only remaining possibility was to tie off the cervix, the

neck of the womb, through which ran the arteries that supplied it with blood. This would choke off the haemorrhage, but it meant an inexorable next step—severing the uterus, which could not live without blood, from the cervix.

In that moment Porro made his final decision. With a *serre-noeud*, a wire loop which could be tightened by means of a spindle, he constricted the neck of the uterus and the blood vessels running through it. Seconds later the flow of blood stopped.

Now Porro indicated the bistoury, a small, slender surgical knife. It was handed to him. While in the back of the room the voice of the newborn baby grew steadily louder, Porro severed the uterus from the cervix three-quarters of an inch above the wire loop. The venture into the unknown had been taken.

With sponges the assistants sopped up the blood in the abdominal cavity. Porro then laid the *serre-noeud* holding the end of the cervix on the abdomen. The wire loop held the stump of the uterus and the blood vessels so firmly that they could not slip back into the cavity. Porro passed silver wires, one after another, through the edges of the wound, twisted their ends together, and applied gauze and plaster. Finally, with strips of plaster, he firmly fastened the *serre-noeud* to the abdomen and the right thigh so it could not be displaced.

Porro's record of this case history from May 21 to July 10, 1876, is a testimony to his anxiety, hopes, disappointments and fresh hopes. For the first few days the general clinical picture of fever and vomiting corresponded to that of the typical fatal Caesarean section. But each time he changed the dressings Porro was reassured. The external incision was healing with very minor festering. The stump of the uterus above the noose began dropping off; the arteries had sealed themselves off. The *serre-noeud* was removed. A drainage tube showed no alarming secretions from the abdominal cavity. On May 27 he was able to remove the three lowest silver wires. But were not these favourable signs deceptive?

The patient continued to burn with fever. On the night of June 1 her temperature reached a height of 104·5, and her heart threatened to give out. Porro, convinced that death was imminent, sat by her bedside until morning. Then he took her temperature again—took it a second time.

He could scarcely bring himself to believe the miracle. The temperature was dropping. From then on it dropped steadily every day, until on

June 8 it reached normal. For the first time Julie Covallini showed some interest in her healthy baby. On June 11 she once more had an attack of fever and of pains in the abdomen. Porro, alarmed, was plagued by doubts again. He did not guess that, although he had removed the principal source of infection, he had himself introduced infectious material into the wound from his unclean hands and instruments. That this infection proved to be relatively slight was indeed miraculous. On June 23, the thirty-third day after the operation, Julie Covallini's temperature was suddenly normal again. Seeing her walking up and down, without pain, her baby in her arms, he began to feel certain of success.

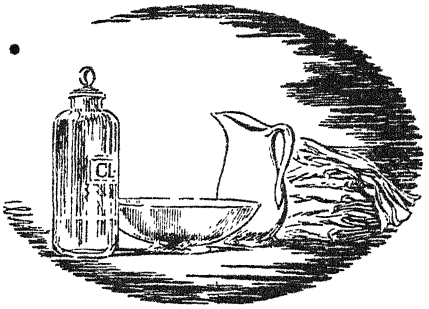
On the following day, however, there was a mild setback which Porro attributed to the swampy air of Pavia. He had her taken to Milan. There her fever promptly vanished. When Porro visited her on the fifty-fourth day, he saw her bounding about like a child.

THAT SAME summer of 1876 Porro published a careful, restrained account of his operation. It created an extraordinary stir, first in Vienna, then throughout Europe and finally in America. Within a few months almost all Caesarean operations in Vienna, then in all of Europe, were carried out with radical removal of the uterus. For the first time doctors reported many mothers surviving Caesareans. The first 134 sections performed by Porro's method showed a mortality rate of 56 per cent. Nowadays this seems a monstrous figure. But compared with the previous death rate of close to 100 per cent, it represented a glorious improvement.

The enthusiasm for Porro's operation was for a time justified. Even after surgical infection was eliminated by asepsis, surgeons had to continue extirpating the uterus in the Caesarean section until a method of suturing the uterine wound firmly enough was discovered. In 1881 Ferdinand Kehrer of Heidelberg devised such a method and successfully applied it in a village in the Odenwald, in southern Germany, operating on a kitchen table. This discovery finally made Porro's operation unnecessary in those cases where the uterus was healthy.

At the time I myself first learned of Porro's operation it struck me as a reminder of an era of surgery which I considered to be already passing. In Glasgow, visiting Joseph Lister, I had just witnessed the birth of a new and wonderful age in which the causes of surgical infection were no longer a mystery.

SALVATION



Early Equipment for Surgical Cleanliness

Dirty Hands

INSTEAD of persisting for decades after the discovery of anaesthesia, the causes of deadly pyaemia and wound fever should have been recognized and overcome within a few years. But the man who at that time sensed the way out of the inferno of fever and death, and desperately preached his gospel, was scorned and derided—as Wells had been. And no Morton appeared.

The man's name was Ignaz Philipp Semmelweis. I may well have been one of the first persons in the United States to hear that name. A few months after I returned from Scotland to the United States in 1848, I received a letter from a friend in Germany who mentioned a young Viennese doctor named Ignaz Semmelweis. "Dr. Semmelweis," the letter said, "puts forth the bizarre thesis that childbed fever is caused by the transmission, during examination, of so-called infectious substances from the hands of doctors and students who have previously performed autopsies. Semmelweis asserts that rigorous cleaning of the hands with chlorinated water is essential to expel puerperal fever from our hospitals."

I laid the letter aside. I who had witnessed the discovery of anaesthesia, who thought myself a progressive young doctor—I did not grasp the significance of Semmelweis's discovery of "contact infection." No more intelligent were the famous professors of medicine in Europe who were then mocking young Semmelweis; nor the American doctors who had bitterly abused Oliver Wendell Holmes of Harvard when he had written of the contagious nature of childbirth fever a decade earlier.

Today that may seem incomprehensible. But it demonstrates the extent to which most of us are slaves of established notions, and how difficult it is for us to accept anything new.

It was owing to chance that the young Hungarian Ignaz Philipp Semmelweis had become a doctor at all. He was a law student in Vienna when he happened to drop into the squat building called "the Blockhouse" which served as mortuary for the Vienna General Hospital. There Semmelweis watched a dissection by Professor Karl Rokitansky, who had created a new branch of medicine, "pathological anatomy," the anatomy of the sick body and its diseased organs. Semmelweis was so deeply impressed by Rokitansky that he transferred from law to medicine.

During his student days Semmelweis was not at all the typical research scientist. He was a merry, rather fast-living young man, somewhat awkward in writing and speech. In 1844, after passing his medical examinations at the age of twenty-six, he accepted the post of assistant at the First Obstetrical Clinic of Vienna General Hospital. He began his practice with characteristic lightheartedness, but within a few months he was a different man: an earnest physician tormented by qualms of conscience.

When Semmelweis began his work in the hospital, puerperal fever was, in his mind, an unfortunate but often unavoidable consequence of childbirth. Or, as the text-books of the day put it with the loquacity of ignorance, "an acute zymotic (fermentative) affliction which can be engendered by mental shocks, colds and so on, but principally by peculiar epidemic and endemic influences, by miasmas and contagions which induce fermentation of the blood. . . ." Semmelweis had naturally absorbed this resigned attitude from his teachers. It lasted until he himself came face to face with childbed fever.

In the month in which Semmelweis assumed his duties, 36 of 208 mothers died in his wards. In those days, women who could do so had their confinements at home; most of the maternity patients at the clinic were "poor cases," many of them unmarried mothers. The director of the clinic, Professor Klein, was inured and indifferent to childbed fever.

A few months after Semmelweis began work at the clinic, Klein noticed that his new assistant was manifesting a foolish concern with the causes of childbed fever. A spirit of restiveness which Klein found greatly perturbing emanated from this young doctor. He was poring over all available books, even troubling the professor with his questions. Semmelweis actually expressed doubts about the inevitability of the disease and about its epidemic character.

The obstetrical section of the Vienna General Hospital had two divisions. The first division, where Semmelweis worked, was used for training medical students. The second division was not visited by students. Here midwives were trained. Semmelweis found that the first division lost more than ten per cent of its patients from childbed fever, whereas the second division regularly lost less than one per cent. Yet the two divisions were side by side in the same building. If childbed fever were a genuine epidemic disease, Semmelweis argued, the number of cases should be equal in both divisions. But when he came to Klein with such arguments, the chief merely shrugged.

Semmelweis, his frivolous life behind him, drove himself to find the explanation. Again and again, in an attempt to determine the nature of the disease, he and his students went to the mortuary and dissected the bodies of women who had died of childbed fever. The clinical picture never changed: suppuration and inflammation, not only in the uterus but also in the liver, lymph glands, spleen, peritoneum, kidneys and meninges. There was a striking resemblance here to the group of diseases lumped together as "surgical fever" but Semmelweis did not yet observe the relationship. After completing the dissections, he and his students went directly from the mortuary to the wards. They carefully examined the women who were in labour, or who had already been delivered. Driven by his tormenting urge to understand, Semmelweis conducted these examinations more thoroughly than was customary.

Suddenly the number of sick and dying women increased—and did so only in his first division. Women desperately sought to escape being

sent there. The two maternity divisions accepted their patients in a rigid schedule of alternate days—the first division on Sunday, the second on Monday and so on. Frightened women would give birth in some doorway because they had waited too long and could not enter the hospital on a Monday, Wednesday or Friday. Those who were brought in forcibly, in the midst of labour, fought and begged to be released for one more day, until the second division was open to them.

How could an intelligent person go on thinking that the "miasmas and contagions," which science cited as the causes of puerperal fever, could operate only on Sundays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays?

Semmelweis became a demon for work. Night after night, with mounting agony of mind, he threshed over the problem with his room-mate, Dr. Markusowzky. He discussed it with Kolletschka, the Professor of Legal Medicine, who worked at his side in the mortuary. But Dr. Klein, most of his students and the nurses were smugly indifferent.

By the end of 1846 the mortality in Semmelweis's division had reached 11·4 per cent; in the second division it amounted to only 0·9 per cent. Semmelweis drew up countless comparisons which showed that physical conditions in both divisions were the same, and that the women came from the same segment of the population.

He then adopted obstetrical techniques identical with those of the second division. He got his patients to adopt a sideways position during the birth process, since this was customary in the second division. The number of deaths did not diminish. In his examinations he practised the greatest possible gentleness, because someone suggested that the hands of the midwives in the second division were gentler than those of the male students in the first division.

Since all the text-books mentioned fear as one of the causes of childbed fever, Semmelweis requested the priest who passed through the wards on his way to the moribund not to ring his bell as he came. Still not one woman the less died. Semmelweis determined only that women with unusually long confinements were almost invariably attacked by the fever. He racked his brains to find the explanation.

By the spring of 1847 Semmelweis was in such a state of mental agony that Kolletschka urged him to seek relaxation. On March 2, 1847, the young doctor left for Venice, but when he returned to Vienna three weeks later he was still without any inner peace. Early the next day he

was back in the mortuary. Accustomed to seeing Kolletschka working near him, he glanced in surprise at the empty place and asked the attendant where Kolletschka was. The man looked at him aghast, and exclaimed: "Doctor, don't you know? Professor Kolletschka is dead."

Semmelweis learned the full story from Dr. Rokitansky. In the course of an autopsy a clumsy student had nicked Kolletschka's arm with his scalpel. Kolletschka paid no attention to the tiny cut. But the following night he was attacked by chills and fever. A few days later, after delirious ravings, he died.

Semmelweis asked for the report on the autopsy which had been performed on Kolletschka's body. As he read this report, he felt altogether stunned. The symptoms listed were: suppuration and inflammation of the lymph glands, veins, pleura, peritoneum, pericardium, meninges! He might have been reading one of the hundreds of reports which he himself had written on mothers who had died of puerperal fever.

"Agitated by the news of Kolletschka's death," he wrote later, "my mind registered with irresistible clarity the identity of the disease Kolletschka had died of, and the disease I had seen cause the death of so many hundreds of women in childbed."

Kolletschka had died because the knife had introduced poisonous traces of cadaverous substance into a cut. Had he, Semmelweis, and his students with their own hands introduced similar material into his patients by going directly from the dissecting-room to examination of the maternity cases? That would explain the difference between the death-rate in the first division and in the second, where only midwives who did not dissect cadavers examined the patients. Agonized, Semmelweis suddenly saw why the women whose labour was slow were most prone to the disease. They were examined more frequently than those delivered quickly.

Semmelweis was so wrought up by the conviction that he himself was the murderer of innumerable women that he believed himself on the verge of madness. He contemplated suicide. But he overcame the temptation to take this way out, and in May 1847 he began his fight. Without consulting Klein, he posted a notice on the door of his clinic. It read: "As from today, May 15, 1847, every doctor or student who comes from the dissecting-room is required, before entering the maternity wards, to wash his hands thoroughly in a basin of chlorine water which is being placed at the entrance. *I. P. Semmelweis.*"

Semmelweis had no idea that micro-organisms were the agents of childbed fever and all other surgical fevers. That discovery was still thirty years in the future. But he knew that somehow disease was transmitted via the dirty hands and instruments of doctors fresh from autopsies.

With ill grace, Professor Klein let this fanatic have his way. Most of the students found this "senseless business of washing" so troublesome that Semmelweis himself had to stand guard to enforce his rule. Chronically irritable as a result of his self-accusation, this once good-natured person was becoming a hated tyrant.

In May 1847, 12·34 per cent of the patients in the first division had died. During the next months there were only 56 fatalities in 1,841 deliveries—a precipitous drop to 3·04 per cent. Never had so low a mortality been achieved in the first division.

Semmelweis was already beginning to believe himself on the verge of success. Then, on October 2, 1847, he found every case in a ward of twelve down with puerperal fever—in spite of the absolute certainty that no one had entered this ward from the dissection-room with unwashed hands.

Semmelweis straightened up from the bed of the twelfth patient to see his students watching him with an expression of ill-concealed triumph. Here at last was proof of the "senselessness of his fanatical cleanliness." Within a few days no less than nine of the ailing women died.

But Semmelweis did not give up—and he found the solution. In the first bed of this ward lay a woman with a discharging uterine carcinoma. Semmelweis and his students had cleansed their hands before entering the room, but one after another they had examined the cancerous patient and then the others, without washing afresh between examinations.

Semmelweis had made his second great discovery. Infectious materials could be carried not only from the dead to the living, but from diseased living patients to healthy persons.

He promptly ordered the most stringent washing of hands before every examination. He supervised the cleaning of all instruments—which he, like every other doctor, had previously wiped off on his coat-tails. He had sick maternity cases placed in isolation.

These new measures stirred up a wave of rebellion. Students and nurses complained to Professor Klein, who resolved to be rid of this

fanatical trouble-maker at the first opportunity. Semmelweis paid no attention to these storm signals. He could think only of the resounding triumph of his efforts. In 1848, in a total of 3,556 first-division maternity cases, there were only 45 deaths. He had slightly improved on the second division's record of 1·33 per cent for that year.

By the end of 1847 Semmelweis had communicated his successes to two of his former teachers, Drs. Skoda and Hebra. Both men urged him to make a written report of his procedures. But Semmelweis, always



Dr. Ignaz Philipp Semmelweis, 1818–1865

awkward with words, said he could not write. Consequently Dr. Hebra himself wrote up Semmelweis's experiments for the Royal and Imperial Society of Physicians of Vienna. His papers evoked scarcely an echo. The most noted European physicians reacted by ignoring or deriding the new doctrine.

Early in 1849, however, Dr. Haller, a distinguished member of the Vienna Medical Society, took up the cause of Semmelweis and of "contact infection." He was the first to recognize its wider significance. "The importance of this discovery for hospitals in general, and especially for

the surgical wards, is so immense that it appears worthy of the most earnest consideration," he declared. But surgeons ignored him, and the usual thousands continued to die of wound fever.

At Dr. Skoda's request, the medical faculty of Vienna University agreed to set up a commission to investigate Semmelweis's discovery. But when Professor Klein heard of this and began to suspect that this ridiculous, troublesome assistant might be on the verge of a triumph, he acted with unbelievably low cunning. Semmelweis, a Hungarian by birth, had shown sympathy for the Hungarian revolutionaries who in 1848 rose up under Kossuth against the government in Vienna. Klein now denounced him as a traitor. The government thereupon banned the projected investigation of Semmelweis's theory. Simultaneously, Klein saw to it that Semmelweis's employment contract was not renewed.

Urged once more by Skoda and Hebra, Semmelweis appeared before the Medical Society on May 15, 1849, in order to demand an impartial investigation of his conclusions. Although he spoke awkwardly and emotionally, his factual evidence was so compelling that he was asked to deliver a second lecture on June 18. On July 15 there followed a discussion in which, for the first time, he found many medical men ready to agree with him. But even now Semmelweis did not write down his lectures, and only inadequate summaries of them, written by others, were published.

Semmelweis believed that he would be most effective teaching. After eight months of vain waiting, he was finally granted a teaching position. He had already accepted when he learned that he was forbidden to make demonstrations on living women; he would be allowed to use only anatomical models for his lectures. Overwhelmed by disappointment and bitterness, he left Vienna overnight and returned to his native city of Budapest. His successor at Vienna General Hospital abolished his regulations as utterly ridiculous.

In Budapest, Semmelweis endeavoured to support his family as a general practitioner and obstetrician, and became more and more resigned to having his ideas overlooked. Then in the spring of 1851 he chanced to visit the maternity ward of St. Roch's Hospital in Budapest. There he found six mothers who had just been delivered in this ancient, dirty building. One of them was dead, one dying, four were ill with puerperal fever. Their physician was the chief surgeon of the hospital,

who, without cleansing his hands or his instruments, alternated between his patients in the surgical ward, with their festering wounds, and the maternity cases.

That visit reactivated Semmelweis's old passion, awoke his slumbering conscience. He sprang once more into action. Since there was no head of the maternity division at St. Roch's, he applied for the position. On May 20, 1851, he was, contrary to all his expectations, appointed unpaid honorary chief of the section.

Far from the scientific world of the time, Semmelweis started from the beginning again. Once more he personally ensured that hands were washed. Once more he reaped a harvest of resistance, hatred and scorn. But in the course of six wearisome years he so far reduced the mortality in the maternity wards that in the last year only eight of 933 women died of childbed fever. That was less than one per cent.

Several times setbacks led him to new discoveries. A sudden incidence of the disease taught him that unclean bed linen could also transmit infectious materials. His eye happening to fall upon a bed made up for a new arrival, he saw the sheets had not been washed since a woman had died in them. He fought a furious battle with the hospital administration for proper laundering of the linen. And finally he won when, raging with indignation, he stormed into the office of the administrative director and tossed the offensive sheets on his desk.

On July 18, 1855, Semmelweis was appointed Professor of Obstetrics at Budapest University. This appointment apparently stirred in him his old urge to save the tens of thousands of women who still died needlessly of childbed fever each year throughout the world. By 1860 his desire to communicate had grown so compelling that for the first time in his life he voluntarily took up the pen. Aided by his old friend Markusowzky, he wrote a book: *The Etiology, the Concept and the Prophylaxis of Puerperal Fever.*

It was a small essay, really, and badly written. Nevertheless, it remains one of the most moving books ever written by a doctor. It was a book of prophecy, and it was published at a time when Semmelweis himself was beginning to suspect that his discovery went beyond the struggle against childbed fever, that it could also combat the closely related surgical fever. He had just succeeded in persuading the chief surgeon in Budapest to prevent sepsis by rigorously cleaning hands and instruments.

But once again Semmelweis was to be terribly disillusioned. At the Thirty-sixth Congress of German Scientists and Physicians in 1861 only one doctor, Professor Lange of Heidelberg, defended the ideas in Semmelweis's book. He stated that he had followed Semmelweis's method and had had only one case of puerperal fever out of three hundred deliveries. But his was a voice crying in the wilderness. The great Dr. Rudolf Virchow, who had discovered the importance of the cell, and who now thought only in terms of cells, condemned Semmelweis because his doctrine did not fit in with Virchow's own: that every disease developed independently in the cells of the human body. Few doctors, therefore, took heed of Semmelweis.

When the disregard of his book had become a certainty, Semmelweis uttered a cry of rage and anguish. That outcry did not help the reception of his doctrines, but it must go down in history as the protest of a great soul who could not look on in silence while thousands died unnecessarily. It took the form of open letters addressed to Drs. Scanzoni, Siebold and Späth, who were among the foremost obstetricians in Europe. Semmelweis accused these men, and all other obstetricians who had ignored his theory, of the wilful murder of thousands of mothers and infants.

Yet even these outcries died away without reverberation. The professors dismissed Semmelweis as a person who "lacked moderation." As a man, in fact, who must be considered insane.

Those who referred to Semmelweis as a madman surely did not suspect how close they came to prophecy. For their own blindness had accelerated the dementia paralytica which was rapidly developing in him.

In 1864 the first clear signs of it appeared. Semmelweis gave lectures in which he constantly reiterated the theme of his tragic open letters, but broke down midway into fits of weeping. He would stop pairs of sweethearts on the street and implore them to make sure that any doctors and midwives they might need in the future washed their hands in chlorinated water. The slightest contradiction threw him into a rage. One night in July 1865, he snatched his baby daughter out of her cradle because he imagined someone wanted to kidnap and murder the child.

Next morning his unhappy wife wrote to Professor Hebra, his old friend and teacher from Vienna, asking for advice. On July 20, on the pretext that Dr. Hebra wished to see him, she took Semmelweis to Vienna. Hebra himself accompanied his former pupil, who scarcely

recognized him, to the insane asylum. For a long time they walked in the garden. Not until Semmelweis was taken to his cell did he realize, in a moment of lucidity, what was happening to him. The attendants then had to subdue him and force him into a strait jacket.

Nevertheless, fate which had so abused him at least granted him a fitting death. He lost his life even as his friend Kolletschka had, as had innumerable women in childbed and countless victims of surgical operations. During one of his last deliveries or dissections Semmelweis had cut his finger slightly. Through this wound entered the very disease which he had devoted the major part of his career to fighting. He died on August 14, 1865, barely forty-seven, after prolonged delirium.

The man who was the first to grasp the nature of sepsis and asepsis, who laid the foundation on which the future of surgery would have to be built, had died of septicaemia.

Invisible Assassins

THE VERY year of Semmelweis's tragic death, a man was at work in London who was destined to reap fame and honour from the solution of the problem of surgical infection. His name was Joseph Lister. When I first heard of him in 1866, I was living in Washington with my young wife, Susan, and our infant son, Tom. I had just finished four ghastly years during the Civil War as a surgeon for the Army of the Potomac, and I was now preparing to revisit Europe.

In June 1866 I received a letter from James Syme in Edinburgh, a delayed reply to one I had written to him during an epidemic of pyaemia in a field hospital in Virginia. My letter had been a cry of despair and helplessness, for I had watched hundreds of men dying in hospitals that reeked with the odour of suppuration.

Now Syme wrote with his usual brevity to suggest that I go to see his son-in-law and former assistant, Joseph Lister, Professor of Surgery at Glasgow University. Syme believed that Lister was on the road to wiping out gangrene and pyaemia. He was carrying on experiments based upon a new concept of the causes of such diseases and, Syme said, had already had astonishing success.

During the past ten years there had been as many proposals for

overcoming surgical diseases as there had been utter failures. But I had reason to rely on Syme's judgment. I made up my mind to begin my planned trip to Europe with a visit to Glasgow.

I arrived there on a cloudy July 6, 1866, and promptly addressed a note to Lister, who asked me to his residence in Woodside Place for the following afternoon. When I entered the house, I was received by Agnes Lister, Syme's daughter, a young woman with a thin face and kindly eyes. She apologized for Dr. Lister, who was delayed. "My husband will be so pleased that you have come," she said. "His colleagues are all so indifferent to his work. They believe that the dreadful conditions in so many hospitals are natural or God-given, and that nothing can be done about them. You do believe my husband can change things, don't you?"

"If your father believes in him," I said, "that means a great deal to me. And since anaesthesia has eliminated surgical pain I have ceased to think that anything is unalterable." I did not admit to her how long I myself had considered the odour of pus which characterized hospitals the "good surgical smell," necessary before healing could take place.

Lister arrived about half an hour later. My first impression of him was disappointing. He was of small build, and his face was not at all the face of a fighter. Rather, it had the benign cast of the good Quaker he was. He wiped the perspiration from his brow as he entered. His tendency towards constant perspiration may well have rendered him shy, even as his occasional stammer made him a poor public speaker. Afterwards, when I had come to know Lister better, he modestly characterized himself as a man without any great gifts, but with a faculty for diligence, tenacity, and absolute consistency in thought and action. And to some extent he was right.

When we were seated round the tea table, he asked me about the treatment of wounds in American hospitals. At that time the full casualty figures for the Union had not been issued, but it was already clear that as many soldiers had perished in the hospitals as on the battlefields. In any case, my own experiences enabled me to give Lister some idea of our American procedures.

As soon as the chaotic conditions at the beginning of the war had been remedied, and some partly useful surgeons recruited, we had begun to experiment with some of the numerous European treatments for

wounds. The old theory that air caused their malignant suppuration had many adherents on American Civil War medical staffs. These surgeons followed the method of the French doctors Chassignac and Guérin, and protected the wounds from air by the application of india-rubber and gold leaf. We also tried Guérin's cottonwool packing, which was placed over the wound and never disturbed for weeks. However, the stench of these filthy cottonwool wads became unbearable. Certain French surgeons had concluded, from the favourable healings of wounds among the soldiers of Napoleon's army in the heat of Egypt, that warmth must play a part in preventing sepsis. But we found Guyot's elaborate heat-boxes and Mayor's warm baths no more successful than the ice-chilled baths recommended by the German von Esmarch. In all cases whatever results were achieved appeared to be purely a matter of chance. Most effective of all seemed to be the method urged by Kern, the Viennese surgeon. He advocated the "open treatment" of wounds; instead of sealing them off, he left them entirely without any dressing.

Finally, the new hospitals in Washington, which were built during the war, had been put up on the "pavilion system," because experience with tent hospitals in the field seemed to show that distribution of the wounded among many small buildings would help prevent the generation and spread of wound fever. The buildings were placed out of line with one another and facing the direction of the prevailing winds—the theory being that the poisonous air would not be carried from one building to the next.

Lister appeared to be peculiarly interested when I mentioned this point. So persistently did he question me that I became impatient. "I have seen a great many of our hospitals," I said. "I was at the second battle of Bull Run, at Antietam, Gettysburg and Chattanooga. I spent six months at a pavilion hospital in Washington. Everywhere wound diseases were present. To my mind, the system of scattered buildings is not in the least effective."

"Such a conclusion will disappoint a great many persons in Europe," Lister commented. "For some time a number of scientists have been saying that there is only one way out: the destruction of all our crowded old hospitals, since they have become regular dens of contagion. Professor Simpson, for whom I have the greatest respect as the discoverer of chloroform, has been gathering round him men committed to

burning hospitals and erecting instead small sheet-iron huts to house no more than two patients each. His statistics do show that surgical diseases occur far less frequently after operations performed in private houses, away from other patients. But I do not believe this is the way. . . ."

Lister broke off, as though feeling that he had spoken too bluntly. When I became better acquainted with him, such pauses, just as he was on the point of expressing his own opinion, no longer seemed so strange to me. He was deeply afraid of premature conclusions, of hypotheses which he could not justify by ample evidence. I saw that I had to extract his theory from him, and so I asked him point-blank: "What *is* the way?"

The abruptness of my question must have struck him as typically American. Instead of replying, he suggested that I go with him on a round of his hospital wards.

AT THAT time Glasgow University was still situated in the oldest quarter of the city. We stepped from the carriage to the paved courtyard of the red hospital building. Lister preceded me through the entrance, walking swiftly past students who greeted him. At last he stopped in front of the door to a ward.

As he opened it, I looked into a long room with beds standing far apart and with, for those days, unusually big windows. As soon as I had stepped into the room, I was startled by something. But it was not until I was half-way across the floor that I became aware of what was unique about this surgical ward. It was the smell.

Involuntarily I stopped and turned, sniffing in all directions. No, in this room there was none of that penetrating odour of pus which had greeted me in every hospital and operating-room in the world. Perhaps it was covered here by a medicinal odour, the odour of something I did not recognize.

Lister had reached the bed of one of his patients. Now he turned to me. "Please step closer," he said in a voice which strove to be composed. "Do step closer."

In the bed lay a boy of perhaps ten—one of those children of Glasgow to whom the games of childhood were unknown, for they were already factory hands.

"Good afternoon, Jimmy," Lister said. "How are you feeling?"

The child smiled, a touching smile of grateful devotion. "Fine," he answered in a hoarse voice.

Over Lister's shoulder I saw the child's right arm, which lay on the bedclothes, tightly bandaged. It was in splints.

"A little more than a month ago Jimmy's right arm was caught between a pulley and a belt," Lister informed me. "It was two minutes before the men could turn off the machine. His forearm was ripped open all round, the muscles so tattered that parts of them had to be cut away. Both bones of the forearm were fractured. An inch of the ulna protruded from the wound and had to be sawed off under anasthesia. Would you agree that by all previous standards he would be judged the certain prey of gangrene or pyaemia?"

"Of course," I said. "It would be mad to attempt to save this child's arm. Any surgeon would amputate as swiftly as possible."

"You shall see," Lister murmured as he loosened the bandage. He took off a metal splint, and then a pad of cottonwool which had covered the wound.

I held my breath for a moment as I bent over Lister's shoulder and, overwhelmed by a feeling of utter incomprehension, looked down upon a clean wound such as I had never seen before in any similar case. No pus. No smell. No scarlet inflammation. Instead, I observed a rosy granulation which had filled the greater part of the deep gash, except for a small spot. At this spot the ulna could still be seen, but it too was a healthy rosy colour.

"This is a lucky accident," I whispered, "or else a miracle."

Lister did not reply. He beckoned to a young doctor standing near by. "Our house surgeon, Dr. McFee, Dr. Hartmann. Will you please bandage as usual, Dr. McFee." He turned to me again. "Shall we go on?" I nodded, still so bemused by what I had seen that I could not ask a question or utter a word.

I followed Lister down the room to another bed and looked upon another thin, pale, child's face. The boy looked bloodless and exhausted. He lay silent and unmoving.

"This is Charlie," Lister said softly, his hand stroking the child's forehead. It seemed to me that his voice shook again with suppressed excitement. "I should like to ask you another question. How would you have acted if this little fellow had been brought to you? Two wheels of

an omnibus rolled over his leg. The tibia and fibula were broken. The fractured ends were embedded in a large lacerated gash. The child was unconscious from shock and loss of blood. The pulse was 168, barely perceptible."

Lister waited in vain for my reply, for here by current medical conceptions not even amputation would have helped; the child would not have survived it. The surgeon could only resign himself to the appearance of the hectic glow of general sepsis in the child's face, to gangrene, and perhaps to a quick, merciful death.

Probably Lister expected no answer. He drew back the blanket and slowly, almost hesitantly, removed the bandage. It was as though he dreaded what he might see: a surprise, a threat to his hope and his conviction. When the wound lay exposed before me, a very faint, almost inaudible sigh of relief passed his lips.

Both ends of the fractured tibia lay free within the wound. The upper end was already partly surrounded with granulation. The lower end was white and lifeless, like the innumerable bones I had seen in our military hospitals; but here, too, I could detect no sign of pus.

"If no sepsis has entered a wound, the body will heal even lifeless bones," I heard Lister saying. He repeated these words once more, giving each one full weight. Then he straightened up from the bed. "I had no hope for this child," he said. "But now I believe he will live." He repeated, with a touching undertone of naïve joy, "He really will live."

"I think you are right," I said in confusion, "to judge by the appearance of the wound. But are these cases sheer chance, or miracles?"

"I myself am not yet sure," Lister replied. "I hope they are miracles. I keep hoping that every day, but I am still not certain."

Just then Dr. McFee came up to the bed. He was carrying a bowl of some light-coloured liquid from which rose that peculiar medicinal odour I had already noticed. Lister stood silently for a few minutes, watching McFee bandage the child's spindly leg. Then he turned away. "Come," he said. "Let us go to my office."

LISTER'S office was in the western tower of the Glasgow Road Infirmary. I sat on the deep window ledge while he paced the room and explained to me his method of treating wounds. In a general sense this is what he said:

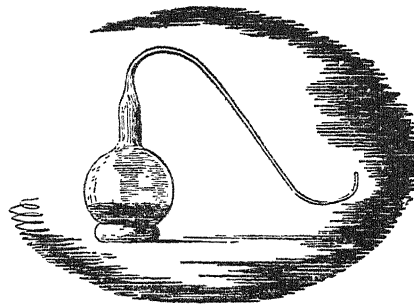
"I have always been interested in the problem of fatal surgical diseases. When I was studying under Erichsen in London, he taught that gases or miasmas which hung over hospitals found their way into wounds and generated fermentation or putrefaction. He had worked out the exact quantity of gas or miasma the air might safely contain. But I began to doubt the gas theory when in 1849, during a regular epidemic of hospital gangrene, the only remedy that proved at all efficacious was to burn the wounds out with nitrate of silver. Nitrate of silver could not destroy a gas, but at best something inside the wounds. At least so I reasoned. I continued, however, to treat wounds in the usual fumbling fashion until about a year and a half ago.

"That was when Anderson came to me. He is Professor of Chemistry here in Glasgow, and I had often discussed wound infection with him, suggesting that there seemed to be a kinship between the putrefaction or fermentation of dead tissue and that of other substances. Now he brought to me the June 1863 issue of the French periodical *Comptes Rendus Hebdomadaires*. The paper he wished me to see was entitled *'Recherches sur la Putréfaction,'* and the author was Louis Pasteur. Do you know of him?"

I had to admit that the name meant nothing to me.

"You will certainly hear the name again," Lister said. "Anyway, to continue: Anderson, perched on the sill just where you are seated now, gave me a quick summary of Pasteur's article.

"Pasteur had for some time been conducting careful microscopic examinations of fermenting substances. He had consistently discovered in them tiny living creatures which overnight often increased enormously in numbers. This increase was accompanied by an intensification of fermentation. Pasteur therefore concluded that these living creatures must be the cause of fermentation and putrefaction. If Pasteur boiled the fermenting substances, or even just heated them considerably, the development of the living creatures abruptly ended and further fermentation could be prevented. Pasteur's hypothesis encountered violent resistance from almost all scientists. They asserted that these living creatures, in so far as they really existed, were not the cause of fermentation but a consequence of it, the result, as it were, of new molecular combinations. This led Pasteur to perform an experiment which conclusively refuted his opponents—at least that is how I see it."



Type of Beaker Used by Lister and Pasteur

Lister went to his desk, took a drawing from a folder, and held it out to me. It showed a plump beaker of glass with a long neck, which bent sharply down and then turned slightly up again.

"With beakers of this type," Lister said, "Pasteur proved that small living creatures, or microbes, produce putrefaction and fermentation. Pasteur filled the beakers with meat broth or milk and then boiled these liquids inside the beaker. Nothing happened: there was no fermentation. Pasteur argued that, if microbes entered from the outside, with the air and particles of dust, they would gather at the lower bend of the long, curved neck and would not enter the body of the beaker. If that were the case, fermentation should start when he tilted the beaker so that its liquid contents ran into the neck and reached the microbes in the lower bend. He tilted the beaker and waited. But he did not have to wait long. In the previously microbe-free contents of the beaker he found microbes only a short time later. They multiplied with tremendous speed, and fermentation began."

Lister paused, his light-brown eyes fixed probingly upon me. "Do you see it?" he asked. "Here was this beaker in which microbes could develop and multiply only when it was tilted, and here in my hospital lay patients with open fractures which were regularly attacked by gangrene, whereas closed fractures healed without it. The parallel seemed obvious. From that moment on I considered ways to prove that microbes engendered gangrene and pyaemia by entering the wounds. But I could not boil the wounds. Nor could I bend them into curved beaker necks."

He went over to the desk again and took up a piece of tarry, strong-smelling stuff. "Only a short time after I had read Pasteur's paper, I learned that a certain Dr. Crooks had eliminated the stench of the drainage fields in the city of Carlisle by impregnating the sewage with a coal-tar preparation called carbolic acid." He handed me the piece of tarry material. "Here it is as a solid. I concluded that, if the stench of putrefaction had been overcome, it must have been because the putrefactive microbes were destroyed by the carbolic acid. If I covered wounds with dressings soaked in carbolic-acid solution, might not these dressings operate as filters to keep microbes away from the wounds?

"I have followed this plan, and of all the cases thus treated I have, to this day, lost only one, and that because a tiny additional wound was not noticed. In the great majority of cases, the wounds healed without any suppuration at all I force myself to continue doubting. Every time I open a dressing, I give these doubts free play. But there is no evidence on which to found doubts."

The Blind Gods

I OFTEN picture Lister to myself as I saw him a year later, at the moment he mounted the speaker's rostrum: small, dressed in black coat and grey trousers, his head slightly drooped from that shyness he never entirely lost, and in his hand his manuscript: "On the Antiseptic Principle in the Practice of Surgery."

The date was August 9, 1867; the place, Dublin, where the British Medical Association was holding its thirty-fifth annual meeting. I owed my seat in one of the front rows to James Syme and Henry Thompson, who sat directly in front of me. Thompson, who had just been knighted after his successful treatment of King Leopold of Belgium, had already spoken on his experiences in hundreds of bladder-stone operations. A short distance away on the left I noticed the portly figure of James Simpson, the discoverer of chloroform.

But all my attention now was focused upon the coming moment when the assemblage would hear from Lister's own lips the story of the miracles I had seen in Glasgow. I was sure I was about to witness as great a triumph as the first successful use of anaesthesia twenty years before.

Lister's forehead glistened with perspiration. I saw the muscles of his throat tense, as if he were preparing to overcome the speech difficulty which troubled him especially at moments like this.

Since Lister had first led me through his wards in Glasgow, he had experienced set-backs but overcome them. He had learned to prepare low-percentage solutions of carbolic acid, which did not irritate the tissues. He had also learned to interpose a layer of "protective cloth" between the wound and the carbolic dressing.

After his first successes with compound fractures, he had applied his system to an equally dangerous surgical ill: abscesses of the hip muscle. Filled with markedly malignant pus, these abscesses were almost always fatal. Under protection of a carbolic-drenched shield, and using a scalpel washed in carbolic, Lister had ventured to open one. After a sleepless night, he found the following morning that the abscess was already beginning to close—without fever or fatal suppuration. Experiment after experiment had followed on surgical cases of the most varied kinds—all with success.

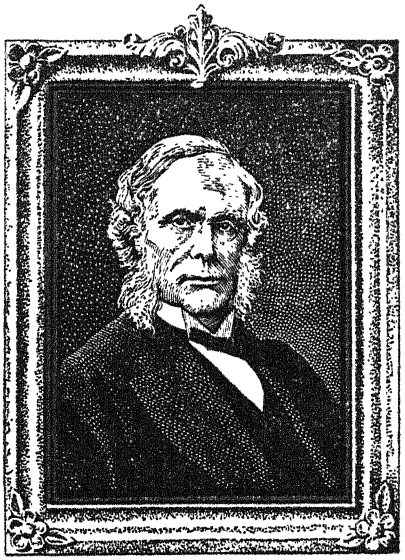
Lister had then asked himself: Was it still essential to let the free ends of the ligatures with which blood vessels were tied dangle out of unclosed parts of deep surgical wounds, as was then customary? They had served till now to help the wounds drain. But if the wounds were not infected, could not such ligatures be clipped off close to the blood vessels, thus avoiding their interference with the closing of the wound? Could they not be made of material soaked in carbolic acid and left behind in the patient's body to be absorbed? Lister had begun experimenting with this idea and the results seemed to him very promising.

And then fate had literally forced upon him a really unique proof of the value of his technique. In the spring of 1867 his sister Isabella Sophie Lister had developed cancer of the breast. All the surgeons Lister consulted, including Syme, had refused to undertake an operation. It had been discovered that breast-cancer operations gave promise of some lasting success only if they were accompanied by extensive incision, removing the tissues and glands of the armpit, which were often involved with cancer as well. But this radical operation was mortally dangerous because the huge exposed wound admitted pyaemia or gangrene.

On June 17, 1867, Lister, in an indescribable state of mind, operated on his own sister in Glasgow. After the operation he went through a

period of almost unendurable waiting, but under his carbolic dressings the huge surface of the wound healed in a few weeks. This was, as far as I know, the first successful breast amputation with armpit excisions in medical history. Lister was under no illusion about the dangers of recurrence. It was the healing of the wound as such that gave him the final impetus towards what Syme had long urged: a public explanation of his system at the Association meeting in Dublin.

Lister began to speak hesitantly, but soon his voice became firmer. As



Dr. Joseph Lister, 1st Baron Lister, 1827–1912

he described Pasteur's researches and his own discoveries, I waited for the first signs of interest and astonishment among the audience. Instead there was a curious silence, and I began for the first time that day to feel uneasy. There could be no doubt that Lister's stammering speech at once made a bad impression. He was not the man to dramatize, to carry his audience with him. Suddenly I could sense a wall of resistance. I could guess the thoughts in the minds around me.

Lister was now saying that Pasteur had proved that germs from the air were responsible for fermentation and putrefaction. When was that?

Where? Could Lister produce these germs, show them to the audience? And who in Dublin had ever heard of Pasteur? Pasteur was not a medical man. This Frenchman must have been mistaken; his theory of fermentation was one speculation among innumerable others.

And what was this about carbolic acid? Was Lister's dressing anything but another concoction, one more in such a wearisome list, to protect the wounds from the miasmas of the air? There was nothing new here, nothing new at all!

I tried to read the expressions on the faces around me and caught a glimpse of Simpson. He seemed agitated: I knew that egoism and vanity had grown in him with age. Then I realized by his flashing eyes that the aggressive old lion was in a choleric rage.

Lister had now come to his theory on ligatures. The use of threads soaked in carbolic acid, he said, might mean for surgery an end of the perils inherent in rotting ligatures and post-operative haemorrhages from blood vessels. I could not understand what there was about these words that made Simpson so indignant.

At this time I did not know that Simpson, inspired by the American surgeon Marion Sims's favourable experiences with silver wire for stitching, had ceased to ligature blood vessels with long threads. Instead, he squeezed the vessels closed with metal clamps. A blood clot then formed which sealed off the bleeding. To many surgeons a blood clot seemed unreliable for sealing a blood vessel. They had refused to adopt this technique which too often had been followed by severe post-operative haemorrhages. But Simpson was fighting for general recognition of his "acupressure," and Lister, with a new theory, had now intruded upon his private domain.

Lister concluded his lecture by saying that for nine months he had not had a single case of pyaemia in his wards. When he descended from the platform, I saw a questioning look in his eyes, directed first at Syme, then at me. Slowly, the applause began. It was nothing like the storm of jubilation I had expected, but it did show some awareness of the significance of his efforts.

Then even as I joyfully joined in the applause, I glanced again at Simpson's face. He was burning with outrage. At this moment he asked for the floor. With short, heavy steps, left hand pressed against his chest, he went to the platform and launched a savage attack. After his first few

words I was hot with indignation. Simpson declared, curtly and condescendingly, that the use of carbolic acid Lister had described had long ago been applied, and abandoned, in France and Germany. As if that were not enough, Lister wanted to employ ligatures of thread, though, as everyone present knew, he, Simpson, had overcome this primitive method by the use of metal clamps which never produced suppuration.

I observed the audience listening with the respect which the famous Simpson always called forth. And I heard, aghast, the loud applause that was, as always, accorded to Simpson. Syme shot a glance of sympathetic fury and disgust at Lister. Lister silently bowed his head.

I realized then and there that Lister's discovery was not going to take the world by storm. I was grieved by Simpson's attack. Had he forgotten how he himself had once fought for recognition of the use of chloroform in childbirth? Was Syme right after all? Syme had always called him a "wolf in sheep's clothing," an egoist who disguised himself as a humane and kindly person.

SIMPSON'S real battle against Lister began a few weeks later. It may be that he was excited to the point of action only by the significant, if limited, response to Lister's ideas. A good many surgeons in Dublin had at least listened to Lister with attention, and earlier articles he had written for the British medical journal *The Lancet* were now accorded belated recognition. A number of newspaper articles dealt cautiously with the carbolic acid treatment of wounds.

Then, on September 21, the Edinburgh *Daily Review* published an anonymous letter signed "Chirurgicus," a Latin word for surgeon. The writer declared that he had on his desk a book of seven hundred pages, written by Dr. Jules François Lemaire of Paris in 1863, and that in this book Dr. Lemaire had anticipated all Lister's arguments on the application of carbolic acid to the treatment of wounds. A few days later it was discovered that Simpson had previously sent this same letter to all well-known physicians—proof that Simpson himself was "Chirurgicus."

Lister searched for Lemaire's book. When a copy was finally located in the library of Edinburgh University, he studied it with the pedantic care natural to him. The French apothecary Jules François Lemaire had experimented with carbolic acid. He had actually developed a fundamental theory similar to Lister's theory. Only—and this was the crucial

fact—he had left it at that. His experiments had been crude. He had never developed a method of protecting wounds, as Lister had done.

In a letter to *The Lancet,* Lister wrote that he had now read Lemaire's book for the first time. He explained that he had never claimed to be the first to use carbolic acid, that he claimed only to have discovered a technique for preventing the entrance into wounds of living germs. Probably other chemicals would serve as well. He warned against expecting miracles from carbolic acid. Success could be achieved only if it were used within the framework of his carefully developed system.

Shortly after Lister's letter appeared Simpson at last entered the arena openly. His merciless polemic, "Carbolic Acid and Its Compounds in Surgery," occupied several pages of *The Lancet.* In this article Simpson not only sought to prove Lemaire's priority over Lister, but launched a general onslaught against the use of carbolic acid. His emotion led him into revealing his reasons for opposing Lister's ideas so savagely. Lister's chief aim, Simpson wrote, was to achieve the healing of wounds without suppuration. This goal, however, had already been attained in Aberdeen Hospital solely through the use of his, Simpson's, acupressure. And then Simpson demanded, with a fierce old man's jealousy, why Lister and others refused to adopt his method.

Lister replied promptly. But this mild Quaker was incapable of Simpson's violence and personal rancour. He preferred to present, in a series of articles, an exact description of his system, that readers might then form their own judgment. Sober, objective, containing no references to Simpson, the articles were published by *The Lancet* without comment, and had little influence. It was already too late.

Simpson's tirades had succeeded in bringing about a vital shift in emphasis. Whenever physicians thought of Lister's method, they thought only of carbolic acid, and not of protecting the wound from the entrance of living germs. Doctors who were open-minded enough to experiment with the "Lister treatment" would wash out wounds with carbolic acid, only to stuff them with unwashed gauze. Others poured carbolic acid over a dirty dressing that had covered a wound for days, and then discovered that carbolic had disappointed them. In vain Lister tried to explain. In vain he pleaded: "You must see with your mind's eye the living germs which attempt to infect the wound from the air, see them as clearly as you perceive flies with your body's eyes."

When Simpson died of a heart ailment in the spring of 1870, he had achieved neither of his last great aims. The old hospitals, which he wished to replace with a great many airy huts, had not been destroyed, and his arterial clamps had not conquered the world. But he had succeeded in isolating Lister from his colleagues. In 1873 *The Lancet* could lightly mock at Pasteur's theory and wonder how, at the present stage of science, Lister could continue his attachment to it. In England surgical students sang satirical songs like "Microbe, busy microbe." And in the hospitals surgical patients continued to die of pyaemia and septicaemia.

Misunderstood or attacked, Lister continued to go his own way. He was not spared failures, which at times shook his faith. Today we know that the wounds Lister treated so carefully were often already infected. Disappointments, therefore, were inevitable. But Lister always overcame them. He began washing his hands and instruments in carbolic-acid solution because he told himself that the invisible germs from the air could cling to these also and be transmitted to the wounds by contact. Then, to destroy the germs which he was convinced were floating in the air above the operating field and might approach the wound, he devised sprays which produced a dense carbolic mist. The carbolic spray produced coughs and headaches, and soaked the surgeon and his assistants, but Lister continued to insist on it. He also began washing the patient's skin round the incision area with carbolic-acid solution and he surrounded the area with carbolic-soaked cloths.

With unflagging patience he also searched for a germ-free material for ligatures. He and his wife spent Christmas 1868 at his parents' home in Upton. Here, helped by his nephew, he operated on a narcotized calf, and ligatured several arteries with threads of catgut which had been soaked for four hours in a carbolic-acid solution. When the animal was slaughtered a month later, Lister found that the ligatures inside its body had not only caused no suppuration but, since they were made of animal intestine, had been absorbed by the surrounding tissues as he had thought they would be. This was the basis on which future surgery would build its technique of arterial ligature.

At the end of the year 1869 Lister received good news from Germany. Shortly after his discovery was first reported in *The Lancet,* Karl Thiersch, Professor of Surgery at Leipzig, had tried his system. Now, less than three years later, he reported that his clinic was completely

transformed and that he virtually never encountered gangrene or pyaemia. Other German surgeons, including the highly esteemed Richard von Volkmann of Halle, fell into line. From Switzerland, too, came reports of successes.

Lister had meanwhile succeeded his ailing father-in-law, James Syme, as head of Syme's clinic in Edinburgh. Lister's pupils in Edinburgh absorbed his ideas, but he remained isolated from his colleagues there. Probably it was the natural desire for encouragement that led him to travel to Germany in 1875. This journey was a triumphal parade through the German universities. There followed a trip to the United States. I saw Lister at the International Medical Congress in Philadelphia, and later in Boston and New York. Several times he demonstrated his method of opening an abscess, and received great applause. But the effect of his visit did not last in America, and after his departure the old, rooted customs held sway for a long time.

By the time Lister returned to England, he was a changed man. For the first time he was borne up by a sense of public recognition. When in 1877 Sir William Fergusson, Professor of Clinical Surgery at King's College in London, died, Lister applied successfully for his place—although there was sharp criticism of the appointment. On October 1, 1877, he gave his inaugural lecture in London. Naturally he spoke on the subject that so deeply concerned him. With bottles of milk, he demonstrated the fermentation induced by germs from the air. Before long the first scornful "Moo" arose from the students. Laughing voices called out: "Close the door, or one of the professor's microbes will get in."

So once again Lister was mocked and disregarded. His lectures were ill attended. The nurses in his wards rebelled against his "mania for cleanliness." He stood alone with four young assistants he had brought from Edinburgh, who for the first time in their lives encountered in the London hospital the smell of pus. But now there was little reason for Lister to despair. There had meanwhile taken place in Germany, a development that justified his long struggle, and convicted all his opponents of blindness. In the small German town of Wollstein an obscure country doctor had for the first time proved conclusively what Pasteur had suspected and what Lister had built his whole method on: the existence of living microbes which engendered pus, gangrene and fever.

This obscure country doctor was Robert Koch.

From Wollstein to Baltimore

WHEN IN 1877 I read Koch's first paper on the discovery and isolation of a living disease germ, the bacillus of anthrax, I formed a heroic image of him. I was, however, in no mood to go travelling, owing to the death of my son, Tom, from appendicitis, which was inoperable at this time. Two years later another paper by Koch appeared, describing the first of those bacteria which caused the murderous diseases of wounds. This was a boon for me, for I had been struggling for years to make American surgeons understand Lister's antiseptic method of operation.

Early in the spring of 1880, I trod the cobblestones of Wollstein's main street and stopped in front of the steep-gabled house where Koch lived and practised as district physician. And then I sat waiting in the parlour with the doctor's wife, as I had once waited in Lister's parlour. But Emmy Koch was no Agnes Lister. Agnes Lister had believed fervently in her husband. Emmy Koch viewed her husband's research work as an unfortunate and ruinous obsession. That much I gathered in the first fifteen minutes of our dragging conversation. Her husband was always making his patients wait, just as he was now making me wait. He used to have a fine practice, she complained, but nowadays he neglected everything for his microscopes, mice and guinea-pigs. Several times she went into his consulting-room to remind him that I was there, and each time she returned with a shrug. He was taking photographs through the microscope, she reported; the heavens might fall and he would still go on taking his pictures.

At last Koch appeared in the low doorway. He was a man of medium height, pale, barely thirty-six but already stooped from sitting over microscopes. His long, narrow head was sparsely covered with hair; his beard was shaggy and unkempt; behind their spectacles, his near-sighted eyes were inflamed.

He shook my hand curtly. His own hand was raw and discoloured, eaten by acids. He preceded me into his consulting-room, where a smell of carbolic acid and caged animals was wafted into my face. It came from behind a crude wooden partition, where Koch took me to show me his

"research laboratory." There were a few small tables crowded with vessels containing liquids or dead animals, a revolving stool in front of a microscope, small cages filled with guinea-pigs and white mice. In one corner stood an old open wardrobe which Koch apparently used as a primitive dark-room. Involuntarily, I showed my surprise at this make-shift cluttered little room, from which had come discoveries that were to revolutionize medicine.

Koch stood amid his apparatus with a distracted expression. He picked up several microscope slides, brought them close to his eyes, and then asked abruptly: "Do I understand that you come from America?"

As soon as I said I did, he became almost lively. The word "America" had touched his heart. Later I learned that as a young man, the son of a miner, he had dreamed of adventurous voyages round the great world. His wife had virtually forced him to choose between far places and a sober, respectable life at her side. When I learned of this, I understood Koch for the first time. His dream was not yet over. The researches that led to the discovery of bacteria may well have been only a substitute adventure for him. He had sought the unknown in the small world accessible to him.

Shortly afterwards, as I sat bent over Koch's microscope, I saw the spherical bacteria called cocci which, Koch had discovered, engendered pyaemia in patients who had undergone surgical operations. Here I saw it within my reach: the ancient enemy, the object of Lister's struggle. It is easy to understand the excitement with which I listened to Koch as he began to tell his story.

As district physician Koch had dutifully examined the bodies of sheep which died by the hundreds of a mysterious disease called anthrax. All that was known about it was that the spleen of the diseased sheep turned black.

As early as 1849 a young doctor named Pollender had announced that he had seen curious little rods in the blood of sheep that had died of anthrax. Little attention had been paid to him, or to a French doctor named Davaine who transmitted the disease to healthy sheep by inoculating them with blood containing these little rods.

When, despite the opposition of his wife, Koch bought his first microscope and rediscovered the little rods, the sight awakened his stifled yearning for adventure. They seemed at first to be quite lifeless and

were mixed with other small animalcules. Koch thought that some way should be found to isolate and enliven them. If he could breed them, and then transmit them to healthy animals, and if these animals then fell ill, he would have proved that these rods were the carriers of the disease, these and these alone.

The microscope had existed since Galileo, and countless scientists had done research with it, seen many mysterious microbes and animalcules. But none of them had taken Koch's particular road.

Microbes, Koch now said to himself, would need some physical substance to serve as a nutriment. This substance must be free of other germs, and to make observation easier it should be transparent. Koch chose the fluid of healthy ox eyes.

Furthermore, he decided, the germs would need body temperature in order to develop. He devised a heating apparatus out of an ordinary paraffin lamp. Then he held a sliver of wood in fire long enough to destroy any germs that might be on it. With this sliver he placed a tiny quantity of blood containing the rods in the warm ox-eye fluid. Again and again he thought the rods were multiplying. But each time he performed the experiment he found that other, spherical microbes, which must have entered the fluid nutriment afterwards, multiplied in such quantities that they blotted out his rods.

Finally he hit upon an idea to prevent the entrance of other germs. On a previously heated microscope slide he placed a drop of the ox-eye fluid and blood. Over the first slide he then placed a thicker, also heated glass slide. This second slide had in it a depression, somewhat larger than the drop of fluid and blood, which enclosed the drop without touching it. All round this depression Koch had rubbed vaseline. Now the vaseline made the two slides adhere and prevented air from reaching the concavity which covered the drop. With one swift movement, Koch turned the slides over. The drop hung freely over the depression in the second slide, held on the first slide by surface tension, and completely cut off from possible germs in the air. Koch's "hanging drop," a home for isolated microbes, had been invented.

Koch placed these slides under his microscope, and to his astonishment he did not have long to wait. The rods reproduced with great speed. His few became thousands. After a short time there were so many that he could no longer count them. Plainly they were very much alive.

Probably they would multiply in precisely this manner as soon as they reached the healthy body of an animal They would flood the animal's blood and—he assumed at first—stop up the arteries. But in order to prove this, Koch would have to transmit isolated microbes to healthy animals. He did not have sheep for experimental purposes. Koch decided to try mice.

With a heated sliver of wood Koch removed his "hanging drop" from the slide and placed it in a cut in the tail of a mouse. Then he waited. Next day the mouse was dead. Koch opened the spleen. It was literally filled with tiny rods. All symptoms of anthrax were present. Overnight he had succeeded in doing what no one had ever done before: he had proved that living germs of disease exist, and that a living germ was the cause of anthrax. He repeated the experiment a dozen times, with the same result.

Koch wrote an account of his discovery, and of some further experiments with these germs, "bacteria" or "bacilli," as he now called them, to the director of the Institute of Plant Physiology at the University of Breslau, Professor Cohn. Cohn at once recognized the value of his work, and invited him to Breslau, where he demonstrated his experiments. They were so convincing that there could be no room for doubt.

At this time several noted professors requested a laboratory and a professorship for him in Berlin. But Virchow, who had already crushed Semmelweis, now spoke out against Koch. So, after three weeks, during which he produced a paper on the bacillus of anthrax, Koch returned to Wollstein.

He had set himself a new goal now. It was essential, he decided, to make germs plainly recognizable to everyone. He discovered that living germs could be dyed, and that different types absorbed different dyes. By dyeing germs, therefore, he could distinguish them from one another and from their surroundings. This was a discovery of enormous importance. In addition, Koch found a way to photograph his bacteria through the microscope.

Equipped with these new tools of research, dyes and the camera, Koch set about hunting for germs that might be responsible for the hospital diseases: erysipelas, pyaemia, tetanus and gangrene. He discovered that pyaemia was actually produced by germs, just as Lister had assumed without being able to prove it. This, he told me, was only

the beginning, for the germs of the various wound diseases were hard to recognize. But a medical and surgical revolution was in the making in Koch's laboratory. Of that I was fully convinced when I left Wollstein.

A few months later Robert Koch was appointed to the Imperial Public Health Office in Berlin. Thereafter he had far better facilities at his disposal, and made discoveries that carried his name round the world. Among these were his discovery of the agent of tuberculosis in 1882, and of the cholera bacillus in 1883. He died in 1910.

WHILE I paid my visit to Wollstein, I had left my wife, Susan, behind in Halle, at the home of Professor Richard von Volkmann, who had been among the first of many German surgeons to adopt Lister's antisepsis. Ever since, he had been one of Lister's most ardent supporters. Susan had not been feeling well; she had complained of slight pain and discomfort which was, in reality, the harbinger of an imminent grave illness. Her chief reason for staying was, however, the pleasure she took in the company of Volkmann's wife, who spoke excellent English.

On my return, I found Susan in the parlour of von Volkmann's stately house in conversation with a young man who seemed in dress very much the Englishman, but who spoke like an American. He was a lean young man with an athlete's shoulders, knobby features, conspicuous ears, a look of stubborn self-sufficiency and a lively manner.

"Henry," Susan said after we had greeted each other, "this is Dr. Halsted, from New York. He studied at the College of Physicians and Surgeons and worked at Bellevue Hospital, and has been in Europe for two years. And now he is going to work with Professor von Volkmann. His special interest is Lister and antisepsis, and we have been waiting eagerly to hear what you can tell us about Dr. Koch. . . ."

"It is rare for anyone back home to be interested in Lister's antisepsis," I said. "In Germany almost every surgeon has been converted to Listerism. German surgery seems to be taking an enormous lead over the rest of the world."

Halsted agreed. "But you cannot expect people who have never cleaned their hands and instruments, and who have worn their operating jackets until these were stiff with blood and pus, to suddenly begin believing in the wicked bacteria," he said. "Most of our American medical men

have never peered into a microscope. To put antisepsis across, a new generation of surgeons is needed. And it may well be that Lister is only the precursor of what is to come."

"How do you mean that?" I asked.

"Lister has never seen specific bacteria; he has only assumed their existence. He developed his whole system against an enemy he never saw. Now Dr. Koch has made bacteria visible. Lister's method is pure empiricism—based on experiment and observation. Sooner or later it will have to be replaced by exact science.

"Professor von Bergmann in Würzburg, with whom I have lately worked, may be on the road to doing just that. He was a surgeon in the Russo-Turkish War three years ago. There was no carbolic available. Nevertheless he had consistently favourable results with bad wounds by wrapping them promptly in clean plaster dressings, nothing else. He has a tremendous head for system, and now he will never rest until he has found out why wound bacteria sometimes do not produce suppuration even without the use of carbolic acid. Some surprises may be in store for us."

"I quite agree," said von Volkmann, who had just entered the room. He approached us, a majestic figure of a man with a huge red beard, dressed in trousers of Scottish plaid, a braid-trimmed frock-coat, and an artist's flowing red cravat which delighted Susan every time she saw it.

Von Volkmann was a curious compound of energy, tenacity and ruthlessness, with the dreaminess of the German Romantics and boundless personal kindliness. In fighting for an idea he was capable of savage outbursts, but as an army doctor during the siege of Paris in 1871 he had written a book of charming fairy tales, *Reveries by French Firesides*. His students of surgery loved him because his lectures and conversation were always illuminated by the fire of his imagination. His sensitivity had led him to Lister, after a period of initial scepticism. During the Franco-Prussian War the French had lost ten thousand out of thirteen thousand amputees; on the German side hardly a case of amputation recovered. Seeking desperately for some solution, von Volkmann had successfully tried the Lister method. Thereafter he had become a key figure in the crusade for antisepsis.

"Coffee is ready," he said. He turned to me. "Before you leave Germany, I would like to recommend that you go to see von Bergmann.

Since his personal bout of erysipelas last year—he infected himself accidentally during an operation—he has combated the disease with all the more determination. He has now added something new to Lister's technique. You know, operating aprons are black so that they will not show dirt and blood. Well, von Bergmann insists that all his doctors and nurses wear white, newly washed gowns. It makes quite a picture. You must see his operating-rooms, and the man himself—he has a great future." A faint shadow clouded his fine blue eyes for a moment, as though he sensed that there would not be much more of a future for himself. He was already suffering from the spinal disease that would bring him to an early grave.

"But now for coffee," he said quickly.

SUSAN AND I decided to postpone our visit to von Bergmann until the end of the summer, which we planned to spend on the Bay of Biscay in France. Then, instead, there came Susan's terrible illness, the tragic tale of which I must still relate. As a result, I did not meet von Bergmann until years later. Nevertheless, I followed developments in asepsis sufficiently to see the predictions of that evening at von Volkmann's house become realities.

One "invisible assassin" after another was brought to light during the years subsequent to 1880. Fehleisen, a German-American physician, found the bacterium which produced erysipelas, a form of streptococcus of amazing hardiness; Koch's Japanese disciple, Kitazato, isolated the tetanus bacillus. The road seemed wide open for Listerism. Yet biologists and surgeons obsessively fabricated new theories, so loath were they to admit that living germs actually engendered pyaemia, erysipelas and tetanus.

Many scientists fought a bitter rear-guard action. Billroth of Vienna clung hard at first to his theory of "phlogistic zymoid," an alleged irritant in wounds which affected the blood. Bacteria, he declared, came later. Billroth also argued that there was in reality only one "fundamental bacterium" which assumed different forms according to the type of wound. Paris was a hotbed for such theories. They came into being chiefly because their authors lacked Koch's skilled technique and confused the nuclei of disintegrated cells with bacteria.

Progressive surgeons had now accepted Lister's methods and Koch's

discoveries, but the great body of second-rate surgeons throughout the world thought Lister's procedures too troublesome, and preferred any theory which did not support Lister and Koch. Human inertia continued to prove its power.

Carbolic acid caused skin lesions on the hands of many surgeons—lesions that defied treatment. Moreover, the carbolic spray occasionally caused poisoning and kidney trouble among both surgeons and patients. These tribulations were useful pretexts for avoiding the trouble of treating wounds on Listerian principles. In many of the hospitals carbolic treatment was instituted only after the death of the old surgeons. Other surgeons did not capitulate until their patients began avoiding their evil-smelling hospitals.

When Halsted began to practise in New York, he found himself compelled to set up a tent in the grounds of Bellevue Hospital in order to create a clean operating-room. At Presbyterian Hospital there was an open struggle between Halsted and another surgeon, Briddon, because Halsted called upon him in the amphitheatre, in the presence of the students, to wash his hands.

By the mid-nineties, however, Lister's method of treating wounds had conquered the world. And the new converts went far beyond the example of the long-unrecognized master. Wounds, even the whole abdominal cavity, would be flooded with quarts of carbolic solution. And a spate of other antiseptic preparations poured out of laboratories. Chief of these was corrosive sublimate (bichloride of mercury). Listerism was running rampant.

But at this very time a new development was reported from von Bergmann's clinic.

Lister had assumed that the germs of infections descended upon wounds, hands and instruments chiefly from the air. That was the reason for his carbolic spray, which hung like a mist over the operating-tables. Von Bergmann's assistants, Lange and Schimmelbusch, now used the techniques created by Koch to examine the germ content of the air. The result of their investigations was a great surprise. Virtually no agents of wound infections could be found in the air, nothing but a few harmless moulds and yeasts. On the other hand, in the dust of the floor, or in a single drop of secretion from a suppurating wound on an uncleansed surgical instrument or on unclean hands, there were millions of

microbes, most of them dangerous. The bacteria which produced wound infections were much more likely to enter wounds through direct contact with dirt, instruments and hands than from the air.

Semmelweis, long since forgotten, had been right in his theory of "contact infection."

All over the world Lister's spray rapidly disappeared from operating-rooms. Lister himself did not hesitate to declare it superfluous. It was clear that his methods had been based on a largely incorrect premise. But in fighting microbes from the air, he had succeeded in annihilating germs on hands, instruments, dressings, ligatures. The fact that the germs did not come from the air failed to affect the final result.

The researches of von Bergmann and his colleagues threw open a new problem, however. How effective were the means which Lister had used in this struggle against microbes? The results of the investigation showed that two per cent carbolic acid solutions would destroy anthrax bacillus within a minute, but that even a five per cent solution over a period of days could not affect bacterial spores. Bichloride of mercury produced similar results. Were the occasional failures which occurred even with Lister's method due to the fact that existing antiseptics did not destroy certain types of bacteria?

The research now in full swing yielded other surprises. Dirt and fats vitiated the effectiveness of chemicals. Bacteria wrapped themselves in these substances as if they were suits of armour. Was that why wax-coated surgical threads and ligatures always produced suppuration, even though they had been soaked for days in carbolic acid?

The darkness began to lift. In the course of his experiments Robert Koch demonstrated that live steam killed bacteria and spores which resisted all chemical solutions. Von Bergmann's assistant, Schimmelbusch, concluded that exposing instruments, bandages and ligatures to live steam would help to ensure absolute freedom from microbes in operation wounds. He and the French scientist Terrier became, almost simultaneously, the creators of steam sterilization—which soon conquered the operating-rooms of the world. At about the same time the German surgeon Gustav Adolf Neuber devised new instruments made entirely of metal instead of with wooden handles. These could be boiled in water.

The surgeon's hands could not be subjected to boiling water or steam.

Yet research in Germany proved that bacteria swarmed in the lines and folds and under the fingernails of the hands. Dipping the hands in carbolic solutions, the procedure introduced by Lister, proved to be only partially effective. Innumerable experiments were tried during the latter half of the 1880's. Hands were washed, brushed, scrubbed with sterile cloths, dabbed with alcohol and corrosive sublimate, then coated with sterile pastes. The Austro-German surgeon Mikulicz was the first one to try sterilized knitted gloves on his hands. But in the course of operating, these quickly became soaked and had to be changed constantly.



Dr. William Stewart Halsted, 1852–1922

Then, in the summer of 1890, the solution was found in Baltimore. The man who solved the problem of "clean hands" was William Stewart Halsted, now Professor of Surgery at the recently founded Johns Hopkins Medical School.

In June 1886, while strolling along Twenty-fifth Street in New York, I had come upon the luxurious house which Halsted shared with Dr. Thomas McBride. Halsted operated at this time in no less than six

hospitals, including Roosevelt, Bellevue and Presbyterian. In addition, he gave instruction until late at night, at home, to some fifty students who came to him for training in the methods of European science.

Seeing his name on the brass doorplate that June day, I had boldly rung the bell. But I found only McBride at home. With visible constraint, he informed me that Halsted had gone to a hospital in Providence for recuperation. Oddly enough, he pretended not to know the nature of Halsted's illness.

My curiosity aroused, it took me only a few days to find out that Halsted had been conducting experiments with cocaine, which was just then coming to the fore as a local anaesthetic, and had become an addict. He was in the hospital now for a cure—nor was this his first. I was given the impression that his addiction was incurable, and that his career was virtually over. Consequently, when I went to Baltimore in the spring of 1890 to see Johns Hopkins University and the almost completed hospital, I was astonished to find Halsted Professor of Surgery at the new medical school.

Later, I learned that Dr. William Welch, who had studied pathological anatomy in Europe, had for years been endeavouring to establish the same branch of science in the United States. Even before Halsted had fully recovered from his addiction, Welch called him to Baltimore and placed the pathological laboratory of the hospital at his disposal.

As it turned out, in overcoming his drug addiction Halsted seemed also to have risen above the hectic careerism of his successful years in New York. He became completely absorbed in quiet scientific work. Above all, he studied wound infections, and performed surgical experiments on the thyroid glands of dogs. When I saw him again, he seemed very different from the man I had met in Halle. His youthful liveliness had been replaced by a rather impersonal coolness, though in appearance he was as fashionable as ever.

Baltimore in those days was still a rather dreamy Southern city, with shady trees lining the old streets. On warm summer evenings people still chatted over back fences. There were no sewers; on rainy days the populace had to use stepping-stones to cross the streets, and on Saturday nights soapy water from the bathtubs of the town overflowed the gutters. Mosquitoes swarmed over from Jones Falls, and malaria and typhus never quite died out.

In this provincial atmosphere Halsted seemed altogether out of place. He wore a top hat as he drove through the streets in an open landau. His shoes were made in Paris. Not only did he import his shirts from Paris, but he sent them back to France for washing and ironing. He spent his scanty leisure time either at the Maryland Club or at prize-fights, sitting with solemn, emotionless mien as he watched the boxers. It sufficed, however, to see him walking beside outgoing, easy Dr. William Osler, a Professor of Medicine at Johns Hopkins who was to become world famous, to realize how many of Halsted's idiosyncrasies sprang from intense shyness. His emphatic dignity, his tendency to make sarcastic comments (though he himself was rather helpless when he became the butt of wit) were simply efforts to shield his inner self from the world.

When he invited me to his chilly but elegant rooms on the third floor of the hospital, therefore, I was not a little surprised to find a young woman there, preparing coffee. Halsted's strong Turkish coffee had to be prepared in a very special way, and he would carefully pick over the beans in order to remove any which had been roasted a shade too pale. He attended to this with the same precision with which he smoothed the folds out of a tablecloth before a dinner or organized the preparations for a new type of operation.

I observed that the young woman had learned the art of preparing coffee to Halsted's satisfaction. He introduced her as Miss Caroline Hampton, chief operating-room nurse. From the few words she spoke I was able to deduce a cultivated background, but also a shyness and inner solitude like Halsted's own.

She left very shortly, and Halsted then told me something of his plans for the surgical treatment of thyroid diseases and breast cancer, and of the plans that Welch, Osler and he had conceived for making Johns Hopkins the centre of scientific surgery in America. But he said not a single word about his recent invention which had led to the greatest possible perfection of asepsis: the rubber glove. The story of this invention mingled objective science with those highly personal matters which Halsted preferred to keep to himself. I understood his silence when Halsted married Caroline Hampton on June 4, 1890, a short time after my visit.

The story of Halsted's invention will always remain one of the oddest

episodes in the history of surgery. In the spring of 1889 Miss Hampton, who had just completed her training, had come from New York Hospital to Baltimore. She was from a once prosperous Southern plantation family, and apparently her cool, distinguished personality had made a great impression upon Halsted from the very first.

During the winter of 1889–90 the skin of Caroline's hands was attacked by an eczema unquestionably caused by the sublimate which was used for disinfecting hands. Halsted's assistants first began to suspect his feelings for Caroline when he undertook numerous experiments to cure the eczema. By the end of the year it seemed that Caroline must leave the operating-room—and probably Johns Hopkins, Baltimore and Halsted as well.

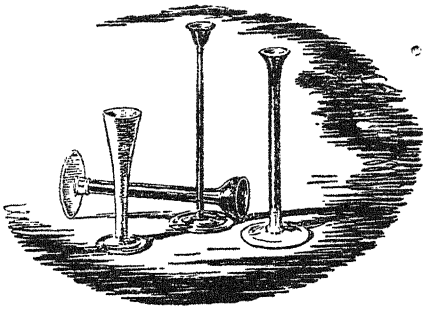
We can only imagine that fear of losing Caroline spurred Halsted's ingenuity. One day he suddenly presented her with a pair of gloves made of unusually thin rubber which would protect the hands and yet not interfere with their work. Such gloves had never existed before. The rubber gloves occasionally worn by anatomists were of a crude, thick material which destroyed all the sensitivity of the hands; they could not possibly be used for operating on a human being, or even for assisting in operations. But Halsted's gloves, made specially by the Goodyear Rubber Company, were like a second skin which could be sterilized by steam. From that day on Caroline wore them at all operations.

When Caroline Hampton left the operating-room to become Halsted's wife, the gloves had won general favour at Johns Hopkins. Quickly, they became an indispensable surgical appurtenance. When one of the best assistants, Dr. Bloodgood, for the first time donned rubber gloves for an operation, he commented with gusto: "What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander."

Rubber gloves soon took their place in operating-rooms throughout the world. Surgery was now equipped to extend its work aseptically to every organ of the human body. From the beginning of the 1880's, the current surgical development had widened and gathered speed at an accelerating rate.

Meanwhile, however, during 1880–81, my personal life had taught me that every single step forward has to be fought for and won individually. Alas, the lesson was borne home to me through my unfortunate wife, Susan.

HARVEST



Various Forms of Early Stethoscopes

Susan Hartmann

I STARTED up that night as if from a nightmare. The place beside me where Susan slept—always on her right side, curled up slightly, her shoulder and left arm out of the blanket, her glossy long black hair bound in braids for the night—this place was empty. I saw that the glass door leading into the garden was wide open. Seized by anxiety, I got up, slipped into my dressing-gown, and went out into the garden.

The land running down to the shore was almost as bright as day, and Mont-Saint-Michel rose out of the sea, the stones of the ancient buildings plated with moonlight. Susan, attired only in her thin night-dress, was leaning against one of the ivy-grown pillars that bordered the garden, her head buried in her hands.

She did not notice me until I came up close behind her. Then she dropped her arms and turned towards me. Her delicate face was as beautiful to me after fifteen years as it had been on our wedding day. But now, in spite of her always extraordinary self-control, I saw on her features the traces of overwhelming dread. She looked deathly pale, and seemed at the moment incredibly fragile.

"Susan," I said, "what is the matter?"

She shook her head. "Nothing," she whispered. "Nothing."

I could feel that she was shivering. Lifting her in my arms, I carried her back to the house and tucked her into bed. Then I sat down beside her. "Susan," I insisted, "something is the matter; something must be. Why are you hiding it from me?"

She forced herself to smile, and I could sense her regaining her composure. "There is nothing to tell you," she said firmly.

This incident took place on the last night of May 1880, in the French fishing village where Susan and I had rented a cottage. The following morning at breakfast Susan still seemed to me unusually pale, and I thought of the old saw that we seldom notice in time changes in those persons who share our daily life. She took only a morsel of toast and some milk. But she assured me that she merely had a mildly upset stomach. We had dined a little too well on Mont-Saint-Michel the night before, she said.

To this day I have been unable to forgive myself for my utter blindness during the next few weeks. Jokingly, I watched Susan's attempts to undo the ill effects of that too abundant meal. In cases of slight indisposition she had always practised self-treatment according to her own ideas, and this habit of hers helped me to continue to deceive myself. But when three weeks had passed and she was still eating nothing but porridge and toast, I insisted on taking her to a small tavern nearby. Obediently she ate and drank what I ordered for her, the tenderest meat and vegetables, the lightest of red wines.

I awoke again in the middle of the night. But this time it was a noise that roused me. The glass door was swinging in the wind and it seemed to me that I could hear the tormented sound of vomiting from the shed where we had installed a bathroom. I started to go outside, then changed my mind and returned to bed.

A baby, I thought, with elation. After so many vain hopes since Tom's death, Susan is expecting a child.

At last I heard Susan's soft footstep outside. I felt her slide into bed beside me—with a low, repressed sigh that set my heart beating faster. Suddenly I could no longer keep silent. "Please forgive me," I whispered. "I did not know."

She started. "You are awake?"

I groped for her hands and kissed them. "Yes," I said. "It was criminal of me, forcing you to eat that way. Had you already realized, weeks ago, that you were expecting?"

"Dear Lord!" Her shoulders began to shake as she wept—and I thought she was weeping for joy, for sheer joy! "Dear Lord," she repeated.

DURING the following days I myself supervised Susan's diet, giving her the liquid foods which she seemed to digest best. And nothing more was said about her condition until the tenth of July.

At regular intervals, since we had been at the cottage, Susan had taken the train to Rennes to shop. This time I urged her to let me go with her. But she was so determined to go alone, and assured me with such a radiant smile that she felt perfectly well, that I finally yielded.

After she had left, however, I was seized by such uneasiness that I began pacing back and forth between the rooms, and finally sat down at Susan's small desk. My fingers were idly toying with her calendar, when the abbreviation "Dr." caught my eye on the page for July 10. Then I read the name, "Dr. Vauban." The other notes were for purchases to be made in Rennes. Vauban was undoubtedly an *accoucheur,* or obstetrician, but why did Susan visit him without my knowledge? I spent a restless evening, and a still more restless night.

Susan did not return until the following noon. She seemed averse to meeting my gaze but threw her arms round me as if I were a spar to cling to. That night, as her head lay on my arm, she said: "Let us return to New York. I am beginning to feel homesick. . . ."

Did she wish the child to be born back home? Or had she some other motive? "If you like, we can leave at once," I said.

"Yes, please," she said. "Yes, yes, let us go at once."

I touched her face and found it wet with tears. Once again that gnawing anxiety I had felt weeks before assailed me. "I will take the train to Paris tomorrow," I said, "and make all the arrangements." I was not thinking of Paris, however, but only of a pretext for seeing this Dr. Vauban in Rennes.

I departed next morning, left the train at Rennes, and hired a carriage to take me to Dr. Vauban. He regarded me with a gravity that in no way diminished my sense of foreboding.

"You are Mrs. Hartmann's husband, then?" he said. "From your card you are a doctor yourself?"

"Yes," I replied, "but I am not in active practice."

"You have a very brave wife," he said.

"Brave?" I repeated. "Yes, too brave to lean on me, I know. I learned of her visit here by sheer chance."

He sat up straight. "You know nothing about my diagnosis?"

"No," I said. "Since learning of these attacks of nausea I have assumed pregnancy. Four years ago we lost our only child. . . ."

"Pregnancy," he exclaimed, a note of utter perplexity in his voice. "There is no question of pregnancy. I assume you wish me to be frank with you, as I was with her. Your wife, I am sorry to say, has a tumour of the pylorus. It is easy to detect. Your wife herself had felt it before she came to me two days ago. This tumour has so narrowed the lower outlet of the stomach that only very light foods can pass into the intestines."

Vauban paused. When I sat numb, unable to say a word, he continued: "The whole clinical picture leads me, unhappily, to conclude that it is a malignant tumour. But even if it were benign, the prognosis would remain the same—except that her suffering would be far more protracted. Your wife realized quite clearly that in this case science knows no cure. . . ."

"I don't believe you," I cried out suddenly.

I saw Susan, in her early thirties, young and vital and beautiful. "I don't believe you!" I insisted. "And if your diagnosis is right, I don't believe your prognosis!"

Even as I uttered this cry of despair, a name flashed into my mind: the name of Professor Péan of Paris, and an article by him that I had read.

I felt Vauban's hand on my arm. "My dear colleague," he said, "compose yourself."

"Forgive my outburst," I said with an effort. "I have one request to make of you. While waiting in your ante-room, I noticed that you have a stack of the *Gazette des Hôpitaux* on your shelves. May I look through the numbers for 1879?"

He looked at me in astonishment. "Of course," he said. "Look through them, by all means, and take as many as you wish."

THE INHABITANTS of Rennes must have thought me mad or drunk as I stumbled down the old streets, until at last I reached the edge of the city.

Right there, sitting by the roadside, I reread the paper which Jules Emile Péan, the almost legendary surgeon of the Hôtel St. Louis, had published a few months before under the title: *"De l'ablation des tumeurs de l'estomac par la gastrectomie"* ("The Removal of Tumours of the Stomach by Gastrectomy").

"Malignant tumours of the stomach," Péan wrote, "are extremely frequent. Since these tumours are fatal, physicians have accorded them little study. As for surgical intervention, this has been considered impossible. For our part, we have always refused to attempt surgical removal of these tumours. . . ."

Two hundred and eighty years, I knew, had passed since a surgeon had first ventured to make an incision into a human stomach. In 1602, Florian Mathis, a barber and surgeon at Prague, had taken this step when one Mattheus, a professional knife swallower who performed in the market places of Prague, had literally swallowed his knife. According to the ancient accounts, magnetic plasters were applied for seven weeks, which drew the tip of the knife into the wall of the stomach so that it could be felt with the hand. Florian cut at this spot and drew the knife out, finding it "altogether rusted." He sewed up the wound, and Mattheus is said to have recovered within a few weeks.

Thirty-three years later the physicians and surgeons of Königsberg opened another stomach to remove a knife. It had been swallowed by a young farm hand who had been tickling his throat with it to induce vomiting after a drinking bout. The story of this remarkable event was circulated in a popular ballad until the Königsberg authorities put a ban on it.

Both operations remained curiosities of medical literature. They just happened, and the patients had been lucky. They led to no efforts at surgical treatment of gastric diseases, nor even to a clear conception of the functions of the stomach. It was not until the nineteenth century that an obscure American doctor named William Beaumont for the first time was able to observe a living man's stomach. On June 6, 1822, at the Fort Mackinac trading post in Michigan, a French-Canadian trapper, Alexis St. Martin, was wounded in the diaphragm and stomach when a

shotgun went off by accident. Dr. Beaumont found him lying on the floor, covered with blood and awaiting his last hour. Over years of devoted care, Beaumont made St. Martin well again—except for an open fistula in the man's abdomen.

So chance joined hands with Beaumont's slumbering genius. Year after year he undertook experiments through that fistula passage to the stomach. He was able to explain the process of digestion and the role of the gastric juices. In 1853 Beaumont presented to the world his immortal book on the physiology of digestion. He also opened up the possibility of supplying nutrients through artificial fistulas to those whose stomachs or gullets were blocked by incurable tumours.

Christian August Eggeberg, a Norwegian military surgeon, was the first to suggest the creation of such artificial channels. Charles Emmanuel Sédillot, of the French School of Military Medicine in Strasbourg, first attempted to produce one by operation in 1848. The death of his patient did not discourage further attempts, since the gastric diseases in question were fatal anyway. Finally, after many years and many disappointments, a technique was developed for making such fistulas without acute danger to the patient's life. Above all, surgeons learned to draw the fistula opening so tightly round the feeding tube that the patient no longer suffered the pain caused by "leaky" fistulas which trickled corrosive gastric juice on the skin.

The question, however, still remained: What had really been done for these patients? Those with tumours of the gullet or the upper opening of the stomach merely starved to death more slowly. In by far the greater number of patients, the tumours blocked the pylorus, the exit from the stomach into the intestines, and here artificial fistulas were useless.

By the time Susan fell ill, the idea of cutting out such tumours and then sewing together the severed connexion between stomach and intestine had occasionally been suggested. Moreover, antisepsis had now come in and the concept of large openings in the abdomen no longer carried the old terror. But between the idea and its realization lay many unanswered questions. Would it be possible to link the stomach directly to the small intestine? Could the sutures be made secure enough? Would stomach tissue and intestinal tissue coalesce, or would they refuse to join?

Most surgeons had been unwilling to take the risks. Most, but not all,

for my vague recollection of Péan's article told me that he had made an attempt. I skimmed the article once more to the passage: "For our part, we have always refused to attempt surgical removal of these tumours." Sure enough, in his very next sentence Péan said: "We were moved to waive this rule by the desperate determination of a patient who suffered from so complete a constriction of the pylorus that for several weeks no nourishment introduced into the stomach could reach the duodenum. We ultimately yielded to the desires of the patient, his family and his physician. The operation was performed on April 9, 1879, in the Frère St. Jean de Dieu Hospital in the presence of other physicians.

"An incision the width of five fingers was made somewhat to the left of the navel. After the abdominal cavity was opened, we observed that the stomach was hypertrophied and filled almost the entire abdomen. We drew the pylorus end of the stomach somewhat towards the *linea alba* (the line down the middle of the abdomen) and soon brought the tumour to the fore. It had the shape of a sausage and measured two and a half inches in diameter.

"We severed the stomach and the duodenum above and below the tumour. To prevent the fluid in the stomach from pouring into the abdominal cavity, we pierced the stomach with a long trocar (a type of hollow needle) through which the fluid flowed out as a result of methodical pressure. We were thus able to close the wound without the necessity of cleaning the abdominal cavity. The operation lasted two and a half hours."

At the time I did not notice the gaps in Péan's account: his failure, for example, to say how he linked stomach and intestines together again, and what type of sutures he used.

"The patient was covered and kept warm," Péan continued. "At the end of the second day he ate with appetite, and retained the greater part of the food. The same was true the third day, except that some of the food was regurgitated together with gall, a sign that the connexion between the stomach and the lower part of the digestive tract had been re-established.

"The pulse, however, remained weak. We believed that the weakness was due to his previous starvation and therefore gave him a blood transfusion. The following day he received a second transfusion. By the following morning we were preparing a third, but we did not have the

opportunity to give it. Before our eyes, the patient died of weakness and starvation.

"It would have been of great interest to perform an autopsy in order to determine whether the sutures of the stomach had been attacked by the digestive juices. Unfortunately, the family refused to give consent. The operation is, to our mind, justified in cases where death by starvation is threatened. For the surgery to have some prospect of success, however, the patient must still possess enough strength to endure so grave an operation."

I read Péan's concluding remarks several times, because they gave me something to hope for. Péan believed in the possibilities of success if a patient came to him early enough. Susan was not yet sapped by protracted starvation. If there were any case that ought to inspire Péan with hope, it was Susan's.

I pulled myself to my feet and went back into Rennes. I had lied to Susan about going to Paris; but now I resolved actually to go there and to call on Péan. I would extract from him a promise to operate on my wife if an operation were really essential, then return for Susan and take her to Paris.

JULES PÉAN was at this time one of the most sought-after-surgeons in Paris. In 1864 he had been the first surgeon in France to follow the example of Spencer Wells, the English gynaecologist, and operate for ovarian tumour. Two years before, he had first introduced the systematic use of the clamp forceps for arresting arterial bleeding. Since surgeons had been cutting deeper and severing more and more arteries, bleeding was a major problem. The operation field had to be kept clear of blood so that the surgeon could see what he was doing. Péan's clamp forceps, with their long shears-like arms depending from the operation wound, remained clipped to the arteries until the most urgent of the operative tasks were finished and the surgeon could proceed to his ligatures. Péan had also discovered the method for removing uterine tumours, and finally the entire uterus, through the vagina, without opening the abdominal wall.

I arrived in Paris on Friday evening and learned that next day was Péan's operating day at the St. Louis Hospital. After a sleepless night, I set out early the following morning. As I entered the operating-room of

the old hospital, I saw the benches ranged with several hundred spectators. Standing beside the operating-table, his assistants grouped round him, was Péan.

At the moment I caught sight of him he was using his scalpel with the skilled, self-assured, artistic movement of a prestidigitator. His rather coarse face, framed in fashionable whiskers, shaved clean round the lips and chin, was turned half towards the audience, half towards the patient. His attitude seemed to say his craft required only half his attention. He was still working in the traditional frock coat and black tie; his concession to the new age of antisepsis took the form of a napkin tucked into his waistcoat, as if he were about to sit down to dinner.

As I watched I was plunged into a psychological state which every doctor ought to experience at least once in his life, to save him from the kind of affectation I now observed in Péan. His virtuoso movements seemed to me those of a poseur. In his cold expression I read superiority, and vain pride in the technical handling of his instruments. The operation was all to this man, and the fate of the patient nothing. In rapid succession, turning from patient to patient, he amputated a foot, excised a cancer of the lip, and operated for a strangulated hernia. All the while, his artificial, chilly manner remained unchanged.

After two hours, Péan looked round the circle with his flashing black eyes, removed the napkin from his waistcoat with a theatrical gesture, said briefly: *"Voilà pour aujourd' hui, messieurs"* ("That's it for today, gentlemen") and swaggered from the room.

I stood amid the throng of applauding students, inordinately cast down by what I had seen and felt. But the despairing hope that had led me here was even more urgent: I had no choice but to go to Péan. With a violent mental effort, I shut out all my uneasiness, and hurried after the surgeon. When I reached the front door of the hospital, he was just driving off in a handsome carriage and pair. I knew that if I were lucky I might still catch him at the Convent on the rue de la Santé, where he performed his private operations. I set out at once.

At the rue de la Santé, the concierge of Péan's section declared, with that lordliness so common in the servants of fashionable doctors, that Péan would not be receiving any more patients that day. I simply walked past him and, shrugging, he left me to my own devices.

I waited for about half an hour in the stuffy reception-room, while

the vision of Susan's thin, gentle, beloved face rose before me. When Péan came in he scrutinized me coldly. "Monsieur," he said with that rudeness he employed with colleagues and unwanted patients, "here in Paris we are not accustomed to your rough American manners. I believe you have already been told. . . ."

"When the life of a human being is at stake," I said, "and when you are the only doctor who can help, I should say that even our rough manners are in place." I told him I had studied his account in the *Gazette des Hôpitaux;* then quickly I related the story of Susan in all its particulars. I implored him to examine her and, if Vauban's diagnosis were confirmed, to carry out his operation for removal of the pylorus.

As I spoke, he listened attentively, but I observed his obdurate expression deepen with every word I said. At last I told him money was no object.

His scowl grew blacker. "That, too, is typically American," he said. "Imagining that everything can be had for money. . . ."

What cruel irony those words were, coming from a man who was himself extraordinarily sharp about money. Péan's annual income was reckoned at forty thousand pounds. An Englishwoman had paid him sixteen hundred pounds for a single operation. He could command, and he insisted on, the highest fees.

"Money will not buy everything," he went on haughtily. "Not, for example, the thing you ask."

"Does that mean that you refuse to treat my wife?" I asked.

"Yes," he said, "that is precisely what it means."

"But why?" I cried out. "Why?"

"You might have deduced the reason from my article," he said slowly and emphatically. "I undertook the operation only under pressure from the patient's family—and pity is the poorest excuse for surgery. Years of intensive research are necessary to make this operation possible. My assistants have already gone to work on the problems it presents. Until they establish a clearer basis for the operation, I shall not repeat my removal of the pylorus."

I remained silent for a moment, summoning up my forces for a new attack. When Péan said dryly, "I am sorry," and started to leave, I blocked his way.

For the first time he displayed anger. "I repeat: I am sorry," he said,

"but I will not treat your wife. I will give you one piece of advice: comply with her wishes. Take her home before it is too late to move her."

He went to the door and held it open for me. I hesitated one second more. Then I left, nodding coldly.

When I consider the matter nowadays I am inclined to think that Péan must have committed serious errors during his operation. Fifty-odd years before, his fellow countryman, Lambert, had discovered a method for assuring firm adhesion and healing in wounds of the intestines and had devised a suture for the purpose. Later Czerny, in Heidelberg, had invented another. It seems probable that Péan had not studied their techniques, nor the extensive work on the removal of gastric tumours then being done in Vienna, which was soon to culminate in remarkable success. Utterly without preparation he had plunged into the adventure of the first great gastric operation.

Even after my own painful feelings had evaporated, Péan remained for me a man who had ignored the human side of medicine in favour of sheer technical skill. When surgery had acquired a more humane outlook as a result of the discovery of antisepsis, he had been unable to change with the times. He died of pneumonia eighteen years after I saw him, in January 1898.

THE FOLLOWING evening I arrived at our village again, sick with despair. When Susan came running out of the house to meet me, I was terrified to see how emaciated she was becoming.

"When are we leaving?" she asked in a soft, eager way. "Have you the steamer tickets?"

I had thought to meet the whole subject squarely, but as she embraced me there was something so poignant about her smile, her pretence of gaiety, that all my resolution turned to cowardice. "We will hear," I said. "Several boats leave Southampton in the next few weeks, but the exact departure dates have not been set."

When we sat down to supper in the glow of the sunset, I saw that she had not set her place at table. "Oh, do forgive me," she said lightly. "I've eaten already. You were so late, and I was very hungry."

I said nothing, and loved her for the deception. But later, when she lay beside me, her breathing calm and regular, I turned on my side as softly as possible. Cautiously, I moved my right hand towards her. At

last it touched her body. About three inches above the navel, my fingers found a palpable elevation, of fairly hard consistency. The tumour was about the size of a child's fist.

I could only think again and again: so Vauban is right. And even as my mind wildly repeated these words, I heard Susan's voice. "So you know," she said.

"Susan," I whispered, "Susan. . . ."

She turned towards me, took my hand and pressed it against her face. "Now you know why I want to go home," she said.

I told her the truth now, mentioned my visit to Péan. "He is the surgeon who first ventured to remove a similar tumour," I said.

Out of the darkness her voice said calmly: "But his patient is dead."

"How do you know?" I exclaimed.

"I have learned something, being your wife. After I began to suspect this, I read everything about it I could find. Dearest, it is hopeless. Do you want me to die on an operating-table? Please, let us go home straight away."

"I want you to live," I said. "I am not going to take you to Péan. But we will find another and better surgeon who will remove the tumour. . . ."

We stayed. I know now that I never transmitted to Susan my desperate faith in surgery, and that she stayed only out of her love for me. I lived at my desk. I wrote innumerable letters, addressed to all the active surgeons I knew of, in Germany, Austria-Hungary, Italy, Switzerland, France, England, Russia and America. To all I sent copies of Péan's paper. I called upon them to lose no time, to repeat his operation and do it better. Week after precious week passed; replies were few, and all of them could be summed up in one word: impossible.

From Germany someone sent me a doctoral thesis submitted in 1810 by a medical student named Karl Theodor Merrem. In three operations on dogs, Merrem had shown that a pylorus affected by a malignant tumour could be excised and a new connexion established between stomach and duodenum. The second of the three dogs had survived forty-seven days and appeared to be in the best of health when it was stolen from the laboratory. But for more than seventy years Merrem's discovery seemed to have been ignored. Seventy years had been wasted, while I was now fighting for weeks and months.

Then, just after the end of October, I received a letter from Vienna. The sender was Johannes von Mikulicz, later one of the greatest of surgeons, but now only a young assistant of Central Europe's most famous and daring surgeon, Theodor Billroth. I had met Mikulicz in London in 1879 when, at the instance of Billroth, he was investigating antisepsis by studying under Lister. In fact, Mikulicz had returned with so enthusiastic a report that Billroth became a convert to Listerism.

Mikulicz's lively temperament had much in common with mine, and we had struck up a friendship. Now he was the first to answer me from Vienna. He wished me to know that two of Billroth's former assistants had repeated Merrem's experiments six years ago, and had been able to prove that dogs could indeed survive surgical removal of the pylorus. Billroth, Mikulicz wrote, had been entertaining the idea of removal of the pylorus in human beings, and was making extensive preliminary studies.

I came running, the letter in my hand, through the garden and into the house, where Susan was resting. Since she had been taking only liquid foods, and avoiding even the slightest physical exertion, her condition had showed no apparent change week after week. She was free from pain and was no longer vomiting. This lull had fed my hopes, and I now pressed her to read the letter.

When she looked up from it, she held out her thin hands. A few tears appeared in her eyes, tears that I took to be tears of joy. I kissed her, and hurried to my desk to write to Vienna.

While I waited for a reply, a letter arrived on November 27 from Karl Schönborn, director of the Royal Surgical Clinic in Königsberg. "Four days ago," he wrote, "in Dr. Ludwig Rydygier's clinic in Kulm, Poland, an operation was performed corresponding exactly to the one you inquired about several months ago. Dr. Rydygier, a young man of thirty, removed a pylorus completely occluded by a malignant tumour, and joined the remaining portion of the stomach to the duodenum. I do not yet have the details, but will send them on to you as soon as I receive them.

"The vital point, it seems to me, is that Dr. Rydygier has expressed great confidence in the future development of this operation. In the hope that I have been of service to you, I am"

"In the hope" Schönborn would have realized how tremendous

his service seemed to me if he had seen me racing to Susan, letter in hand. Half an hour later I drafted telegrams to Schönborn in Königsberg and to Rydygier in Kulm. I gave Rydygier a brief description of Susan's illness and of her condition, and asked him bluntly whether he was prepared to operate. I did so not without qualms of conscience, for the telegram contained a lie. It represented Susan's strength as greater than it now was.

Somehow, my sense of honour impelled me to go into Susan's room once more, before I sent the telegram. I found her lying on the couch by the window. She was sleeping so tranquilly that I sat down beside her for a moment, eager to see some corroboration of my optimistic reports to the doctors. Her left arm lay on the blanket, the hand turned towards me. Involuntarily, my glance fell upon a small red swelling. I looked closer. Then, swaying, I stood up. Noiselessly, I searched the room. At last I found what I was seeking. With unsteady hands I drew from the little cupboard in her dressing-table a small bottle of morphine, and a second bottle containing a morphine solution which Susan had obviously prepared herself.

I felt on the verge of the abyss. Again, Susan had deceived me. She must be suffering the pains characteristic of the last phases in the development of malignant tumours. She had secretly obtained morphine in order to be able to conceal this pain from me.

For the first time I wavered in my stubborn hope that some new mode of surgery would happily end this nightmare. But I quickly pulled myself together. I added to the telegram to Rydygier: "Nevertheless think it better you come for consultation visit to France and perform operation in a French hospital. Money is no object."

Two days later I received a second letter from Schönborn in which he enclosed a report on Rydygier's stomach operation. I opened the report slowly, with trepidation. And then I read:

"Mikotajewicz, Julius, sixty-four years and nine months of age. For the past two years pains in abdomen had never entirely ceased. No previous history of stomach trouble, nor of habitual drinking. On the basis of our findings, we diagnosed a cancerous tumour of the pylorus, without significant extension into the neighbouring organs and probably without metastases (transfer to other organs). Consequently, we considered operation indicated."

If Rydygier could operate on such a case, why not on Susan?

"On November 16, 1880," I read, with reviving hope, "we undertook the operation in the presence of our colleagues."

Rydygier's account was clear and exact. He had made the first incision along the *linea alba*. Then he opened the peritoneum and clipped the edges of his incision to the outer skin, so that he had a clearly outlined gateway into the interior of the abdomen. The tumour could be seen in the incision. Rydygier then placed a specially constructed "elastic compressor" round the stomach, close to the affected part of the pylorus. This compressor partitioned off the healthy part of the stomach, which still contained some fluids. He placed a similar compressor round the duodenum, so that when he cut it the contents would not flow into the abdominal cavity.

After he had separated the tumorous pylorus from the stomach on the one side and the duodenum on the other, and stanched some critical bleeding, the next step was to place the wound edges of the stomach against those of the intestine. In order to fit together the different-sized openings, he cut a triangular piece out of the stomach wall and sewed together the edges of the resultant incision with the Czerny suture, thus reducing the stomach opening to the same size as that of the intestine. He then linked the openings, and sewed the cut-out triangle of stomach wall over the suture, further to ensure that it would not loosen. Doubly cautious, Rydygier took the unusual number of sixty stitches. Then he opened the compressors, releasing the new connexion between stomach and intestine.

The operation had taken four hours, as against the two and one half hours Péan had spent on it—an indication of Rydygier's carefulness. Several times the patient had required injections of camphor, because his heart threatened to fail. Thirty minutes after the end of the operation he awoke from the anaesthesia, was given some wine and artificial feeding, and then fell peacefully asleep.

I read to this point. Then I could not go on; I had only to turn the page and I would learn the decisive fact, the question of life or death. Finally I made myself go on reading. "At twelve o'clock at night the patient became restless. Morphine injection. Between two and three in the morning he complained of a sensation of tightening, and pains in the chest. . . . Then collapse, agony and, about four o'clock, death."

Death, I thought, death; and a sensation of utter weariness overcame me.

Had I denied Susan the fulfilment of her last wish, kept her in France in order to chase after an impossible dream? "No," I said to myself, "no!" I had still to finish reading Rydygier's report. What was his final conclusion?

"The dissection of the abdominal cavity," he wrote, "showed us, firstly, that all cancerous material had been removed and that the sutures had held. The peritoneum was not inflamed. It therefore remains undecided whether the patient died of exhaustion or of acute sepsis—although the former reason seems more likely. We are justified in claiming that this operation has a future. We must not be deterred by the first failure. Above all, we shall have to select early stages of cancer of the pylorus. In addition, a great deal must still be done to develop a good and safe operative technique."

I hurled the article to the floor as though it were to blame for my own error. Hour after hour I paced my room, in my rebellion against fate. I was still in this state when the messenger arrived with a telegram from Kulm. Rydygier had replied: "Unfortunately performance of so difficult an operation outside my clinic is impossible. Am prepared to receive the patient here."

This was the end of my hopes. Possibly Susan might survive the long ride to Kulm, but could I persuade her to undergo such a painful journey if I had nothing better to tell her than that Rydygier's operation, like Péan's, had terminated in death? For a few days I came very close to resignation.

But about this time, some encouraging factors appeared. I discovered that Susan was no longer using morphine. She was also eating a little more. Suddenly the hope awoke in me that this might be only a benign tumour—which would also require removal, but which would give us a little time. My hopes were once again directed towards Vienna.

When I telegraphed Mikulicz, asking about the progress of the work in Vienna, the first winter storms were beginning to pound the coast. I tried to persuade Susan that we should move to Paris but she refused to go. I did not realize that, since it was irrevocably too late to return home, she had determined to pass her last days here in solitude.

I had become so accustomed to the lack of change in Susan's condition after the improvement in December that I did not notice the difference in her during the last week in January. I sprang to the alert only when she suddenly stopped eating almost entirely. Then I discovered that she was again taking morphine. During the first week in February she took a little sour milk, nothing more. I called in Dr. Vauban to try artificial feeding with peptone, which was then greatly favoured. Susan endured the feeding in silence, with a friendly look that said: "Only because you wish it!

Then came February 7, 1881.

When I came back to our room after breakfast that morning and sat down beside Susan's bed, I saw that her skin was beginning to assume the parchment-like hue of starvation. I did not conceal my fright quickly enough. Susan had seen it, and her eyes took on a remoteness and resolution which curiously intensified my fear.

The outside bell rang. I went to the door, and was handed a telegram from Mikulicz. It read: "Professor Billroth recently undertook pylorus-tumour operation on forty-three-year-old woman. Patient is well and convalescing swiftly. Advise coming to Vienna."

It was as though my heart had stopped. I rushed into Susan's room, knelt down before her and held the telegram in front of her eyes. "Susan, read this, read this! They've done it."

Quiet and distant, she let her eyes run over the telegram.

"Susan," I implored her, "please understand what this means. You must not give up; there is no life for me without you. You're going to live as this woman in Vienna is living."

But she looked past me, as though she were already beyond the struggle. "If you think so," she whispered.

"I know it, I am certain of it," I insisted.

"Then go to Vienna," she said with a quiet smile. "Go and see for yourself what has happened there," she said. "And if you believe . . . well, then, come back for me and we will make the journey together."

I LEFT Susan in charge of Marie, the old woman who kept house for us, and set out at once for Vienna, where I arrived on February 10. Mikulicz was waiting for me at the railway station. He told me that he would take me directly to the Second Surgical Clinic to introduce me

to the woman whose tumour had been removed. On the way he told me the story of the crucial operation.

Billroth, after his assistants' experiments on dogs had led to convincing results, had waited for months for a case which would lend itself to surgery. But since gastric tumours were traditionally considered inoperable and were "treated" with palliatives by specialists in internal medicine, few such cases were referred to surgical clinics like Billroth's.

However, there appeared at last, in December, the patient on whom Billroth had operated on January 29 for tumour of the pylorus. She was forty-three years old, the mother of eight children, and for the past six weeks had been able to retain only minute quantities of sour milk. She was nothing but skin and bone by the time she entered the hospital.

In operating on her, Billroth followed a method that had been carefully tested on dogs. He had prepared himself for all possible surprises—which were common enough before the discovery of X-rays. He had previously had the patient's stomach pumped out and flushed, and then had accustomed her to the process of artificial feeding for use after the operation. He then operated under strict antisepsis—and the whole operation proceeded smoothly according to schedule.

Billroth had chosen more favourable lines of incision than Rydygier, let alone Péan. He had also applied other methods of suture, and the ligaturing of the arteries had been accomplished almost without loss of blood. On the whole, his approach resembled that of Rydygier, rather than Péan. In contrast to Rydygier's four-hour operating time, however, Billroth had taken only an hour and a half.

"The patient," Mikulicz said, "showed no signs of weakness or pain after the operation. She did not vomit. At first we gave her only a little ice, then a teaspoonful of sour milk every half-hour. Within a few days she showed evidence of normal digestion. We observed her hour after hour. I frequently sat up all night for fear something might happen. But there were no complications. We have not ceased to feel it an utter miracle."

We walked through the—by present-day standards—noisy and ill-smelling building and stopped at a ward door. "The patient," Mikulicz said, "was feeling so well a week ago that she objected to lying in a private room. She wanted company and entertainment—whereas five days before that she had lain completely apathetic when not racked by

vomiting." He led me into the ward, and to a bed in which a still pale woman sat propped up on her pillows, eating soup.

"This is Mrs. Helene Heller, Dr. Hartmann," Mikulicz said.

The patient smiled brightly. "How do you do," she said with infectious high spirits. "I suppose you want to see the miracle Dr. Billroth has worked on me."

"Yes, Mrs. Heller," I said. But in her place I saw Susan, propped on pillows like this woman, radiant with the sense of miracle, and believing in a new life. I shook hands with Mrs. Heller so heartily that she was somewhat astonished. That same evening I sent two telegrams to Susan, outbursts of confidence, cries of hosanna.

Mikulicz had assured me that Billroth would be willing to operate on Susan. However, he wanted to discuss the case with me. At three o'clock the following afternoon I entered Billroth's spacious house on Alserstrasse. The full-bearded, heavy-set prince of German surgeons scrutinized me closely as he held out his strong, fleshy hand with its uncommonly short fingers. Billroth was a North German, born on the Baltic island of Rügen. He was devoted to his family and was a passionate amateur musician—Mikulicz enjoyed a rather exceptional relationship with the master based on the fact that they often played piano duets.

Now Billroth sat facing me, his massive head propped lightly on his hand. "Dr. Mikulicz has informed me of your wife's case," he said, looking at me with pronounced goodwill, "but I should like to have more details from you before I decide whether I can operate upon her. An operation is legitimate only if there is some chance of success. One can win priority by an ill-considered, half-accidental operation; yet anything of that sort is reckless adventuring, and I cannot subscribe to it."

I told him truthfully about Susan's condition. He did not refuse to see her, but all he would promise was to receive Susan in his clinic, examine her, and make the final decision then.

"I do have one request to make of you," he said. "What we succeeded in doing on January twenty-ninth fills me with pride, but there may still be set-backs in that case. And even if all goes forward, the question of relapse in the case of malignant tumours has not yet been clarified. There are no leaps in the history of science. When we imagine we have taken a great step forward, we always find we have to retreat again three-

quarters of the way. If you are prepared to keep this clearly in mind, I am ready to venture the operation if the examination justifies it."

What would I not have been prepared to promise at that moment? The telegram I sent to Susan a few minutes before my departure from Vienna was an announcement of unqualified victory, which contained not a note of Billroth's cool caution.

When I reached our little village, the carriage from the railway station was too slow for me and I urged the driver on. At last we drew up in front of our cottage and the door opened. Marie stood before me, her eyes fixed sadly upon me. And she suddenly burst into tears.

"What has happened?" I heard my own voice asking hollowly.

But Marie was incapable of speech. I walked slowly down the hall into our bedroom.

Susan lay on her bed in her finest dress, her face showing no trace of the suffering she had endured. It was as though she were sleeping peacefully. In death she was free of pain.

This is not intended to be the story of the deepest sorrow of my life, but an account of the birth of gastro-intestinal surgery. For this reason I shall not speak of the greater part of the letter Susan left for me. She wrote that she wished to take leave of me while her body and perhaps her mind were not yet disfigured by her disease, to remain alive in my memory as she had been during our happiest years. At my side she had witnessed a great part of the recent progress of medicine and surgery, but she knew that it was impossible to force a development which had to mature slowly. Perhaps in years to come the operation I hoped for would be possible. For us, she knew, it was too late.

After Susan's death it took me many years to reach an acceptance of the limits of medical science, and especially surgery. At first I felt wild rebellion that Susan had put an end to her life just as I held the key to her salvation. But I soon realized that I might not have saved her in any case, for news reached me that Helene Heller died four months after Billroth's operation. She had made a complete recovery but died of a recurrence of the cancerous tumour—her death a clear illustration of the limited effectiveness of all operations upon malignant tumours.

Nevertheless, Billroth had won immortal fame by his performance of that first stomach operation, which went down in medical history as

"Billroth I." His second and third operations ended fatally; and many more patients died before "Billroth I" could be considered established. Not until July 21, 1884, did Rydygier successfully perform an operation which gave his patient two and a half more years of life, until a new cancerous tumour formed.

Immediately after his first successful operation, however, Billroth had instructed his assistant, Wölfler, to make a new series of experiments on dogs. These experiments were aimed at developing a method of operation for cases in which so much of the stomach and the intestine had to be removed that a junction ceased to be possible. Wölfler devised such a method. Disregarding the cancerous parts, he drew a coil of sound small intestine up to the sound part of the stomach, cut openings in both, brought the edges of the wounds together, and thus produced a detour connecting stomach and intestine, avoiding the tumorous pylorus entirely. On September 28, 1881, he successfully carried out this operation on a human being. Billroth himself continued to develop this method, which became world-famous as "Billroth II."

"Billroth I" and "Billroth II" soon proved to be the basis of gastric surgery for all types of tumours, and especially for stomach ulcer. And in this field, in a thousand modifications, they proved most successful.

The Long Road

From year to year, henceforth, nourished by new ideas and by the courage of surgeons, the "surgical conquest of the entire human body" went forward. In that story there is no chapter I awaited with more impatience than that on "appendicitis." The conquest of this disease took several decades after the general acceptance of asepsis. Those years taught anyone who, like myself, had lost a child from appendicitis, how long a road surgeons still had to tread. I became most distinctly aware of this on the twenty-third and twenty-fourth of June, 1902. I had been lured to London then by the prospect of witnessing the coronation of King Edward VII.

On June 24 the streets of London were magnificently garlanded; triumphal arches lined the coronation route and glowed with all shades of Edward's favourite colour, red.

POSTPONEMENT OF THE CORONATION.

To the consternation of the nation, and indeed of the world, came the announcement on June 24 that owing to the illness of the King the Coronation Ceremony had been indefinitely postponed.

The official bulletin was as follows: "The King is undergoing a surgical operation. The King is suffering from perityphlitis. His condition on Saturday was so satisfactory that it was hoped that with care his Majesty would be able to go through the Coronation Ceremony. On Monday evening a recrudescence became manifest, rendering a surgical operation necessary to-day."

Signed—
LISTER.
THOS. SMITH.
FRANCIS H. LAKING.
THOS. BARLOW.

I had resolved upon a visit to Westminster Abbey, where the age-old ceremonies for the coronation were being rehearsed. I arrived there at about eleven in the morning. In the dim light of the Abbey, peers and peeresses stood round the ancient Chairs of State for the King and Queen; some were in their ceremonial robes, some still in ordinary dress. Old Sir Spencer Ponsonby Fane was taking the part of the King. Wrapped in a brilliant tapestry instead of the coronation robe, he received the homage of the bishops and nobles, while just outside the windows the hammering of carpenters erecting the reviewing stands added to the din. The Duchesses of Portland, Montrose, Marlborough and Sutherland, who were among the most beautiful women in England, were solemnly bringing forth the canopy held over the sovereign during the anointing.

By twelve o'clock the rehearsal reached its climax. A resounding chorale had just begun to fill the great chamber when a messenger hurried into the Abbey with a letter for Ingram, the Bishop of London. The Bishop perused it, then raised his hand and asked for silence. When the singing stopped, Ingram announced, in a voice he had difficulty controlling: "The King is very ill. He must undergo a grave operation. The coronation has been postponed." Silence fell over the assemblage. A few women began to sob. "We cannot do better than kneel down and pray," the Bishop said.

As stunned as the rest, I left the Abbey and drove to Buckingham Palace. Here and there along the ironwork fence surrounding the Palace were knots of people, staring up at posted bulletins. I worked my way

close enough to be able to read one of them. It is reproduced on the previous page. I pushed hastily back to my cab through the hushed crowd. I was tempted to call at Lister's house to inquire about the King's condition, but I decided he would still be at the Palace.

Meanwhile, news of the King's illness, the operation, and the postponement of the coronation had spread. Now carriages were driving aimlessly about everywhere, and in them sat bleak men and tearful women. I could feel a numbness creeping through the streets as I drove back to the Ritz, where I was staying. As I entered, I heard the hotel owner, Ritz himself, announcing in the thronged dining-room: "The coronation is not going to take place. . . ."

I was immediately surrounded by acquaintances who knew that I was a physician and wanted to be told what perityphlitis was. I explained that it was an inflammation of the caecum, or blind gut, and the surrounding tissues. The blind gut, I said, was a kind of abbreviated exitless sac at the entrance of the small intestine into the large intestine. Inflammation of the caecum had resulted in millions of deaths because the inflamed gut so frequently burst, causing fatal peritonitis.

In America it had been discovered recently that the cause of inflammation of the blind gut was a small worm-shaped attachment to it called the appendix, which first became inflamed itself, due to an accumulation of secretions, and then infected the caecum. For this reason the name perityphlitis had been replaced in America by "appendicitis."

I had come to this point when a loud voice from the background declared: "You may as well say right out, Doctor, that back in the States we take care of this disease by cutting out the appendix before it can infect the blind gut. But I'll wager that the King's doctors went on fooling about with diets and opium until it became a question of life and death."

The attention of the circle round me turned towards my fellow American, whom I had not met before, although he seemed to know me. I profited by the opportunity to slip away.

APPROXIMATELY three hundred and fifty years had passed since, in the sixteenth century, the two anatomists Carpi and Estienne first mentioned the little worm-shaped appendix to the blind gut which they had encountered during a dissection. Vidus Vidius, the Italian physician and

anatomist, coined the term "vermiform appendix" in the same century. As early as 1642 Saracenus described a suppurating abscess which broke through the patient's abdominal wall. We now recognize this to have been an acute attack of appendicitis that healed naturally. This sometimes comes about through "capsulation," the sealing off of the infection by agglutination, or clumping of tissue, and its subsequent drainage.

More than one hundred years after Saracenus, the French physician Mestivier opened a suppurating abscess on the right side of a patient's abdomen. The patient died, and when Mestivier dissected the body he found a burst appendix. But he drew no conclusions, and no attention was paid to his report although for thousands of years many persons had died of appendicitis, with violent abdominal pains, vomiting and high fever.

In 1812 the English physician Parkinson dissected the body of a child that had died after suffering similar symptoms, and was the first to point out the possible connexion between suppuration of the appendix and general peritonitis. A decade later, two French physicians, Louyer-Villermay and Mellier, stressed the importance of the appendix and the possibility of its removal. But once more no attention was paid to these insights.

The famous French surgeon Dupuytren had meanwhile begun to study the matter. But he believed the inflammation of the caecum was produced by a constriction and a lack of mobility in this portion of the intestines. Dupuytren's authority propagated this error despite the fact that other French physicians were already on the right track. In Germany, Dr. Puchelt and his assistant Goldbeck had come to the same conclusion as Dupuytren. They coined the name "perityphlitis," which meant approximately "inflammation in the area of the caecum." This gradually accepted name diverted nearly two generations of physicians from the appendix as the actual source of infection. Perityphlitis was treated with dangerous purgatives, or with opium.

On April 15, 1848, Henry Hancock, a thirty-nine-year-old surgeon at Charing Cross Hospital in London, was called to a young woman who was obviously suffering from perityphlitis. Her doctors had treated her as usual with large quantities of opium, but her condition had grown increasingly critical. Hancock waited, as was customary, for an abscess on the external abdominal wall to appear. But by April 17 death was

evidently not far off. Hancock could feel a hard lump deep inside the abdomen. Moved by the courage of despair, he placed the patient under chloroform and cut down to the lump. Immediately, pus spurted up—pus which would soon afterwards have penetrated into the patient's abdominal cavity and killed her. A few days later she began rapidly to improve. By the middle of May she felt quite well.

On September 25 of the same year Hancock reported on his case to the London Medical Association. He proposed that in the future physicians seek out the inflamed area wherever suppuration was suspected, instead of waiting for such abscesses to reach the abdominal wall. Thus Hancock became the pioneer of active surgical intervention. And he, too, remained unheard.

Years passed before, in 1883, Willard Parker, at this time Professor of Surgery at Columbia University, ventured a lancing of a deep abscess. Thenceforth New York became the centre of surgical activity in the fight against such abscesses. Slowly, the principle of surgical lancing became accepted. But it affected only a few of the most acute cases. Opium, calomel and death continued to hold sway. The pioneers who had once considered the appendix the source of the infection were almost forgotten, although a few doctors continued to study the troublesome little "worm."

Then, in 1886, Reginald Heber Fitz, Professor of Pathological Anatomy at Harvard Medical School, appeared in Boston before the recently founded American Medical Society and delivered a sensational lecture on perityphlitis. He had dissected no less than five hundred persons who had died in various stages of this disease. In virtually all cases he had determined that the inflammation in the region of the caecum had its origin in the appendix. Therefore he rejected the misleading term "perityphlitis" and suggested "appendicitis" instead. Fitz insisted that treatment of appendicitis must be surgical; that the surgeon must not limit himself to opening abscesses, but must remove the inflamed appendix itself and do so at the soonest possible moment.

These principles sounded like wild-eyed radicalism to the majority of his audience. Death was so common a guest in their sick-rooms that its appearance after intestinal inflammation did not especially shock them. Antisepsis and asepsis were just beginning, at last, to win general acceptance. Abdominal surgery was by no means a matter of course for all

surgeons, and particularly not in the United States. Besides, Fitz was an anatomist. Did an anatomist have the right to make suggestions—and in a tone of command, at that—in regard to medical treatment of a disease? The great body of general practitioners, and trained surgeons as well, ignored Fitz's researches and proposals. Europe took still less notice of him, because of the then widespread contempt for American medicine.

Nevertheless, Fitz's work gave the crucial impetus to the development of appendicectomy, and it plainly displayed American independence from rigid traditions and scientific prejudices. European doctors who immigrated to America came precisely because they were seeking this independence. Their urge to plunge ahead seemed to me, at times, even too reckless, for in those years after Susan's death I was wary of exaggerated hopes.

One of these Europeans was Christian Fenger, the tough-minded Dane of Passavant Memorial Hospital in Chicago, who knew eleven languages but never learned to speak perfect English. In his passion to investigate diseases, patients as human beings interested him little. He once railed at a man who had just died under his hands, after removal of a cerebral fibroma: "You fool, to die just as you were cured!"

Among the outstanding American surgeons of this period was George Thomas Morton of Philadelphia, the gay, likeable son of that William Green Morton who had first successfully carried out anaesthesia by ether on that unforgettable October day in 1846. On April 27, 1887, at the Philadelphia Polyclinic and Pennsylvania Hospital, George Morton made the first successful attempt to remove the appendix itself.

Morton had lost first his brother and then his son by appendicitis. In both cases he had vainly urged the doctors to operate. Now he himself, making use of all known antiseptic and aseptic precautions, incised the abdomen of a twenty-six-year-old man who had suffered recurrent attacks of appendicitis. He exposed the inflamed, already partly perforated appendix, tied it off where it joined with the caecum, and cut it away. About three weeks later the patient left the hospital, fully recovered.

Morton had demonstrated that even an acutely suppurating appendix could be successfully removed. Eleven months later he successfully removed an infected appendix which was not yet ruptured. The very next year Charles McBurney in New York reported on seven appendicectomies, with six cures.

But important as these first successes were, there were still many failures. The patients who were brought to the operating-table were already on the brink of death. No one spoke of operations at an early stage. To advocate and carry out such an operation remained the task of another young American surgeon, thirty-two-year-old John Benjamin Murphy.

In the summer of 1890 I made an attempt to meet Murphy in Chicago. From his assistant, I learned that he had discovered signs of tuberculosis in himself, and was living in Las Vegas, Nevada.

I visited him there a few months later. Murphy was a typical Irishman with flaming red hair. As a boy he was employed in a drugstore, then as doctor's apprentice. He had then worked his way through Rush Medical College in Chicago, somehow saved money for a trip to Europe, and studied under Billroth in Vienna. I believe I have never met anyone in whom great ability and real missionary zeal were so closely united with the craving for fame and wealth. Back in his medical-student days in Chicago, young Murphy had engaged in fist fights with students who made fun of antisepsis. Even then he had aroused both envy and hatred by his superior intellect, his capacity for work and self-denial—also by his dramatic ability to thrust himself into the foreground. By the time he took up the problem of the appendix he was the most sought-after surgeon in Cook County Hospital.

When I met him in Las Vegas, he was already beginning to feel well, and we went for many walks together along the colourful, unpaved streets. Murphy's favourite spot was the old plaza where, not long before, covered wagons and herds of cattle had camped for the night. Near by stood the old windmill where horse thieves were hanged. In this surviving bit of the Old West I heard from Murphy the story of his surgical assault upon the appendix.

On the morning of March 2, 1889, a young workman named Monahan, whom Murphy was treating at Cook County Hospital for a broken leg, complained of sudden violent pain on the right side of his abdomen. Two hours later his temperature rose, and he began vomiting. Murphy, who had read Reginald Fitz's publications with great care, realized that chance had put within his grasp a case of appendicitis in a stage seldom seen by surgeons. He acted at once. Barely eight hours after the first attack of pain, he operated on Monahan, removed the

appendix, which was just beginning to fester, and was able to discharge Monahan within a short time, with a smoothly healed wound. The ease with which it had all proceeded convinced Murphy that he had hit on a revolutionary principle of surgery. By November 1889 he had operated on approximately one hundred cases of appendicitis in the early stages, often on kitchen and dining-room tables in order to lose no time. Whenever he operated within the first twenty-four hours, there were no complications.

In November 1889 Murphy addressed the Medical Society of Chicago, which consisted mostly of general practitioners. After describing his work he cried forcefully: "The responsibility lies with the first doctor called in to see the patient." Appendicitis, he urged, was the first thing each doctor should think of in all cases of violent abdominal pain. He described the symptoms: first pain, then nausea and vomiting, usually three to four hours later. Then followed sensitivity on the right side of the abdomen and a rise in temperature. The diagnosis was doubtful only if the nausea preceded the pain; otherwise a surgeon should be called in to perform the operation at once and stop the disease at its source.

Everything Murphy said at that meeting is taken for granted today. But the majority of the general practitioners rejected his thesis. They declared that most cases of appendicitis were cured simply with the aid of opium. Even the few surgeons in the audience thought Murphy's speedy diagnosis impossible. Non-suppurative cases, they believed, should be left to ordinary physicians since these light "catarrhal forms" healed of their own accord and were not worth the perils of an abdominal operation. Murphy tried to explain that these perils were eliminated by operating before perforation, but in vain. In a state midway between rage and despair, he left the hall.

With fierce resolution, he plunged into work again. During the following years, Charles McBurney discovered a particular spot on the abdomen which was sensitive to pain in the overwhelming majority of cases. "McBurney's point," as this spot came to be called, made early diagnosis still easier. Meanwhile Murphy seized every opportunity to talk and write about his thesis. After two hundred successful operations he rejected entirely the distinction between "catarrhal" and "suppurating" appendixes. In every case, even in the earliest stage, he had found the appendix infected.

Murphy's papers were so convincing that one progressive American surgeon after another was converted to early operation. That a healthy appendix might be encountered as the result of a faulty diagnosis was, of course, a possibility, but the benefits of speedy action were too conclusive to be denied. American newspapers began discussing the problem. General practitioners were forced by their patients to call in surgeons. Thus the shift from delay and stopgap medication to early diagnosis and prompt operation proceeded swiftly in the United States. But Europe continued tenaciously and bitterly to resist the trend.

In Europe, too, during the mid-eighties, a few surgeons had operated on the appendix. All such attempts had ended fatally. Then Frederick Treves, a young surgeon at the London Hospital, first succeeded on June 29, 1888, in removing a chronically affected appendix in the interval between two acute attacks. Treves, however, never became an advocate of early operation. Only in chronic cases would he consider removal of the appendix and operate in the lull following a severe attack.

When the first reports on the American development of prompt operation reached Europe, doctors were still entirely dominated by the old ideas about perityphlitis. At last, a dissertation by the young doctor Charles Krafft, on the surgical treatment of appendicitis in America, was published in Lausanne. A few young surgeons then adopted surgical treatment. But they encountered a wall of opposition from the general practitioners compared to which the resistance in America had been insignificant.

Such was the situation in Europe on that June day in 1902, when London trembled for the fate of a king who had been stricken with appendicitis. Early in the afternoon of the twenty-fourth it was announced that Sir Frederick Treves had operated. Everyone knew that the King must be hovering between life and death.

When by four o'clock in the afternoon there was no further bulletin on the King's condition I attempted after all to see Lister. In front of his residence, 12 Park Crescent, I observed from my cab a sizeable group of men whom I guessed to be reporters. While Henry Jones, Lister's old butler, was opening the gate with great caution, these reporters showered me with questions, and pressed close behind me. Henry shut the gate on them rather forcefully and said, with his inimitable dignity, that he

would announce me to his Lordship, but that his Lordship was quite worn out, owing to the recent events.

Now, in the eighth decade of his life, Lister's fame had sped round the world. His erstwhile foes were dead or shamed into silence. Queen Victoria had elevated him to the peerage. He was President of the Royal Society, Honorary Citizen of Edinburgh, and had received eighty honorary diplomas from nineteen countries. But since Agnes Lister had died, in the spring of 1893, he had become a lonely old man. As he slowly raised a cup of tea to his mouth, his hand trembled a little. It had never lost that curious dull coloration which was the result of decades of work with carbolic acid.

"I suppose you have come to see me about the King," he said.

I nodded. He was aware that I was concerned with medical history, not with journalistic sensation, and so he told me the background of King Edward's sickness and operation. The King's illness, he said, had begun ten days before. On the thirteenth of June, he had not felt well during the review of a parade at Aldershot, the military-training centre; his usually rosy complexion had turned quite grey. By the morning of the fourteenth he had complained of pain in the abdomen and intense nausea. His personal physician, Sir Francis Laking, had ordered a gentle laxative; the King was a hearty eater, and Laking had often relieved him of digestive disturbances in this way. On the evening of the fourteenth the King had attended a "tattoo" of the troops, and had eaten shortly before going to bed. Towards midnight he was overcome by such violent abdominal pain, and vomited so heavily, that Laking was again called.

By now Laking suspected perityphlitis, and called for consultation the surgeon Sir Thomas Barlow. Barlow arrived in Aldershot on Sunday, the fifteenth, and remained throughout the day. In the afternoon the King suffered chills and fever. The fever rose. Still no one considered the possibility of surgery. On Monday, June 16, his condition improved somewhat, and Laking persuaded him to drive home to Windsor Castle.

Considerable opium was administered, and the ride to Windsor went off fairly well, but the King had to cancel his appearance at the Ascot races. Not until June 18 did the doctors decide definitely on perityphlitis. By then a swelling in the hollow of the hipbone could no longer be overlooked. Sir Francis Laking informed the King of his diagnosis, and said

that a surgeon must be called. The King had a fit of rage. Only eight days remained before the coronation. Edward realized that a surgical operation would mean postponement of the coronation, and the ruin of all the preparations. He ordered Sir Francis Laking out of the room. After a while, however, the sovereign grew calmer, called Laking back, apologized, and agreed that Sir Frederick Treves should be asked to come to Windsor for consultation.

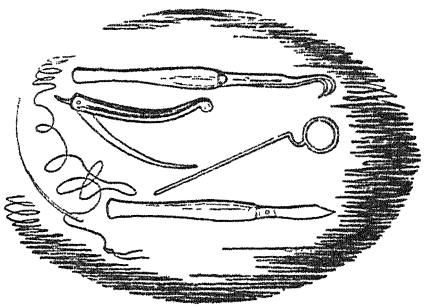
Treves confirmed the diagnosis of perityphlitis, but proposed waiting a few more days until there was absolute certainty that capsulation, which would be endangered by the operation, had sealed the source of infection off from the abdominal cavity. Treves visited the King daily, seeking the most favourable moment for operating. But he was unable to make a decision. Surprisingly, on Saturday, the twenty-first, the royal temperature dropped to normal and the swelling receded. There was general rejoicing. On Monday, June 23, the King travelled by rail from Windsor to London. But by the following day he again suffered fever, pain and vomiting. The operation could no longer be postponed.

The decision to operate was taken at ten o'clock in the morning, and the operation took place at twelve thirty. Treves found an area of suppuration, luckily still encapsulated, surrounding the remains of a completely destroyed appendix. The cavity was drained with two rubber tubes, and the wound dressed with iodoform gauze. The operation took exactly forty minutes, and by the time Lister left the Palace the King had regained consciousness and was virtually free of pain. Treves and Laking were going to stay in the Palace until the King's recovery was assured. "I was only an onlooker," Lister concluded. "The King's fate is now in God's hands."

Dusk was already falling when I left 12 Park Crescent. I got my cab to drive past Buckingham Palace once more. Even in the darkness crowds stood staring up at the illuminated windows of the Palace. The evening newspapers were filled with confused comments about the nature of perityphlitis. The House of Commons had interrupted its deliberations for some medical M.P.s to explain the illness. I drove back to the Ritz with despair in my heart once again over the murderous inertia of the medical world.

The lights of Buckingham Palace continued to burn for ten nights more, while Treves and Laking alternately held vigil at the King's

bedside. Anxiously, they waited for the dread signs of general peritonitis. But luck was with them; the fever diminished and disappeared. Had the King died, the manner of his treatment would undoubtedly have been violently criticized by those English surgeons who were beginning to advocate prompt, radical operation for appendicitis. Could Laking have answered the charge that he had not succeeded in making an early diagnosis, and had called the surgeon too late? Could Treves have refuted the accusation that from sheer lack of grasp he had even then delayed the operation too long? Yet both were children of their times, representatives of European surgery. And European surgery was moving with frustrating slowness towards the course so ardently and prophetically urged by Dr. Murphy.



Old-fashioned Artery Ligation Instruments

The Inner Sanctum

ow SWIFTLY, now slowly, surgery had been extending its range to one organ after another in the abdominal cavity. But the heart, the brain, the spinal cord—all three were taboo until Louis Rehn boldly threw open the door to the inner sanctum.

The story began in the early morning of September 7, 1896. Wilhelm Justus, a young gardener's helper of Frankfort on the Main, had been stabbed as he fled through an ill-lighted park after a drunken fight in a tavern. Shortly after three o'clock in the morning a policeman patrolling the park found Justus lying behind a bench, gasping for breath. He did not respond to questions. The policeman moved Justus's left hand, which

was pressed against his chest. It was bloody. In the man's jacket, immediately above the heart, was a small blood-stained slash, and the shirt was drenched with blood. The policeman went for an ambulance.

A doctor named Siegel was on duty in the surgical division of Frankfort City Hospital when Wilhelm Justus was brought in at three thirty-five that morning. Justus was unconscious, struggling for breath, his face a bloodless yellow. Siegel saw a half-inch stab wound between the fourth and fifth ribs. Then he looked at the kitchen knife which had been picked up along the path. Siegel was on his own. Dr. Rehn, head of the surgical division, was away and not expected back until September 9.

It was plain that the stab wound had pierced to the heart. The pulse could scarcely be felt. Siegel took a long probe and slowly thrust it into the narrow wound to determine the direction of the injury. Slowly, the probe followed the path the knife had taken. It was aimed straight at the heart. Siegel removed the instrument and straightened up.

The policeman who had brought Justus in asked whether there was any hope. Siegel shook his head. Possibly he recalled a remark made by Billroth not long before: "The surgeon who ever attempts to stitch up a wound in the heart may be certain that he will lose all his colleagues' respect for ever." The throbbing centre of life was beyond the surgeon's art. Siegel knew of no case to contradict the principle stated by Aristotle and Ovid: heart wounds were fatal. Justus was obviously bleeding internally—slowly because the wound in the heart was evidently small, but bleeding to death.

Siegel ordered the nurse to give the patient camphor, and place an ice-bag over the wound. Now he expected the policeman to take his leave. But the man threw him a rather embarrassed look and asked where the "Herr Professor" was.

People in Frankfort expected miracles of Louis Rehn—perhaps even the repair of wounded hearts. Rehn was a self-made man, who had never studied under one of the great surgeons. Endowed with great daring, enthusiasm and ingenuity, at forty-seven he was already a world-famous pioneer among German surgeons. He was one of the first to operate for exophthalmic goitre, and for diseases of the oesophagus, which had hitherto been considered inoperable.

Irritably, Siegel said that Rehn was away, and the policeman left.

To Siegel's amazement, Justus was still alive when Rehn returned,

two days later, about seven o'clock in the evening of September 9. Siegel immediately reported the case. Justus was approaching the last agony, he said. The thoracic cavity had been rapidly filling with blood since the afternoon.

Rehn asked to see the man. When he went into the private room in which Justus had been placed, he looked into a face already marked by death. Rehn picked up the wrist and could feel only an occasional faint pulse. Breathing was shallow. The entire left of the chest displayed cardiac dullness. The lungs were obviously compressed by the internal haemorrhage. The stab wound itself was not bleeding, and was pulsating feebly.

Rehn later stated that his imagination drew in the picture. The knife had pierced the pericardium, the protective sac surrounding the heart. Then the tip of the knife had injured the wall of the heart itself and opened enough of an incision to admit blood into the pericardium. In most cardiac wounds, blood filled the pericardium, crowding the heart until it stopped under the increasing pressure. But in this case the wound in the pericardium was probably large enough for the blood to escape into the thorax, or chest cavity. Thus Justus was given a slightly longer lease on life. The heart would continue to pump blood into the thoracic cavity until the lungs were so crowded that they could breathe no more.

This, Rehn thought, was the situation, though he could not be certain. However, did it really matter, since death must ensue one way or the other? Then suddenly the defiant question was there: "Or must it?" Why should they not be mistaken, all those medical writers who for two thousand years had been asserting that all heart wounds were fatal, that any attempt to touch the heart with the knife, or even the suturing needle, would necessarily paralyse it? Why should they not be mistaken? Rehn was well informed on the existing literature. In 1810, the famous French surgeon Larrey had opened the thoracic cavity of a man who had stabbed himself in the heart. Larrey had driven a trocar into the pericardium and drained it of blood. However, he succeeded only in postponing death, since the wound in the heart itself remained open and the pericardium once more filled with blood. Still, Larrey had mentioned that he had touched the tip of the heart with his finger. Was this not an argument against the allegedly fatal effect of contact with the heart?

In 1872 the London surgeon Callender had removed a needle from

the chest of a pewterer; the man had stuck the needle into his coat and then become involved in a fight. The needle had apparently been driven by a blow right into the heart muscle. After making a superficial incision, Callender came upon the eye of the needle, which was bobbing up and down with every heartbeat. He drew it out, and the heart remained intact.

However, Rehn knew of no one who had ever exposed a heart wound in a living human being in order to close it by stitches. But was cardiac



Dr. Louis Rehn, 1849–1930

suture such a reckless idea? Rehn recalled the paper of a man named Block who in 1882 or 1883 had inflicted injuries upon the hearts of living rabbits and then sewed up the wounds. And the rabbits had lived. And last year, in 1895, an Italian named del Vecchio had successfully sutured cardiac wounds in dogs.

Rehn tried to picture how it would be to take hold of a beating heart, to introduce a needle through the restless, ever-moving wall. Suppose he made use of the fractions of seconds between beats? Justus's death was certain unless Rehn operated. Even if the chance for life were slim,

it should be taken. Once Rehn made his decision, he wasted no time. Barely ten minutes later, at twenty-seven minutes after seven o'clock, he began the operation.

It seemed incredible that Justus, who had been unconscious for two days, endured the anaesthesia. Rehn made an incision five and a half inches long between the fourth and fifth ribs. He severed the fifth rib and folded it inward. The thorax was filled with blood. Rehn sectioned a wide gap in the pleura, the membrane which lines the thorax, and the accumulated blood flowed out over the chest. Meanwhile, the outer air entered the thorax. The lung collapsed. Rehn signalled to the anaesthetist to stop the anaesthesia.

The pericardium was now plainly exposed before him. Rehn could see the wound the knife had made in it. Spasmodically, small quantities of blood oozed out. After several vain attempts to grip the pericardium with clamp forceps, Rehn cut deeper into it, and at last was able to clamp the edges of the enlarged pericardial incision to the edges of the external wound. Before him lay the heart, irregularly contracting and expanding. In a moment, as the heart expanded, Rehn had discovered the wound made by the knife. It was exactly in the middle of the wall of the right ventricle, and about half an inch long. From it came a small trickle of blood. Without thinking of the ancient fear of contact with the heart, Rehn laid his finger on the wound. The bleeding stopped, and the heart did not even stumble under his touch. His finger slipped off as the heart contracted in systole; but as soon as it expanded again in diastolic movement, the finger found the wound once more and again closed it. Rehn proceeded immediately to the crucial step: cardiac suture.

One of his assistants handed him a fine needle with a silk thread. He took it in his right hand, while the forefinger of his left hand continued to close the wound in the rising and falling heart. He waited; the heart expanded; the finger slid off. The wound lay exposed, gaping wide. With a swift movement Rehn thrust the needle into the left corner of the wound and brought it out again on the other side. For a moment it seemed as if the heart were expanded too long. Then it contracted again, undisturbed by the thread hanging in the wound. Rehn waited for the next expansion. As soon as it began, he drew the silk thread tight and knotted it for the first suture. The thread held. The bleeding slowed, even though Rehn did not lay his finger on the wound.

Rehn took up the second needle and second thread. Once more the expansion, the swift stab of the needle in and out; once more seconds during which the heart threatened to stop. But then it contracted, expanded once more, and Rehn tied the second knot. Once more, in, out, knot. The edges of the wound were tightly seamed now. Almost at the same moment Siegel exclaimed in a breaking voice: "The pulse is stronger . . . the pulse is stronger."

Rehn ordered the patient to be given sodium-chloride solution. He rinsed out the pericardium and thorax, replaced the rib, and closed the external wound, leaving room enough for a drain to pass through.

Two hours later, Justus was resting peacefully in his bed. His heart sounded strong and regular. Rehn had been sitting beside his sleeping patient. At last he stood up and went out without a word. Siegel silently took his place by the bedside.

Rehn did not even see the doctors and nurses among whom news of the operation had already spread. He walked, as he later said, like a somnambulist out into the coolness of the waning night. He had suddenly become aware of the tremendous importance of what he had done.

THE TWELVE days from the tenth to the twenty-second of September, 1896, were days of crisis for Louis Rehn. On September 10 Justus regained consciousness. He complained of pain on the lower left side of his thorax. His temperature rose to 101·7°. Rehn drained a large quantity of fluid from the thorax, and the temperature dropped. The heartbeat was very fast, and at times the pulse became irregular.

On September 19 the temperature suddenly shot up to 103·5°. Rehn could find no indication of pericardial infection, which would mean certain death, but he opened a second drainage channel on the back wall of the thorax, and from then on the fever declined.

The pericardial cavity then closed without complications. The heart action became normal. Justus suffered longest from respiratory difficulties, for the collapsed lung expanded very slowly. But by the end of the third week of September, when the Sixty-eighth Annual Meeting of German Scientists and Physicians met in Frankfort, Justus was well on the road back to health. Rehn appeared before the assembly and, while they listened in reverent silence, reported on his successful suture of a living human heart.

News of Rehn's operation spread like wildfire through surgical circles in Germany, in Europe and America. The result was that a number of surgeons spoke up who had previously attempted cardiac sutures, but had failed. But one hitherto unnoticed case of successful cardiac surgery came to light.

At Provident Hospital in Chicago, Daniel Hale Williams had exposed the heart of a young man who had also been wounded by a knife. Both pericardium and heart were injured, but the injury to the heart was minor and the bleeding came from a pierced artery. Williams ligatured it and sutured the wound in the pericardium; the cardiac wound healed of its own accord. His patient recovered. Although not precisely a cardiac suture, Williams's operation would undoubtedly have become a cause for an international priority dispute—if Williams had been a white man. He was, however, a Negro. Born in 1858 in Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania, he won his degree at the Medical College in Chicago, and then became a surgeon at Mercy Hospital in Chicago. Later he became chief surgeon of Freedmen's Hospital in Washington and Professor of Clinical Surgery at Meharry Medical College in Nashville. I met Williams several times, and became aware of the deep psychological solitude imposed on such a man by his environment. He had no hankering for foolish priority disputes.

On September 16, 1898, the world was still discussing the assassination, six days previously, of the Austrian Empress Elizabeth, who was stabbed to death on the Quai Mont Blanc in Geneva. That day Rehn talked with me in his clinic and told me the story of his first cardiac suture. Strangely enough I had just come from Geneva, where I had talked to the surgeon Paul Reverdin, to whose hands the autopsy of the murdered Empress had been committed.

The file used by the murderer had penetrated the wall of the pericardium and entered the left ventricle of the heart. The assassin instantly wrenched it out again, so that the Empress thought she had merely been struck a blow with his fist. She walked another hundred and twenty steps to the boat she was about to take, and lost consciousness only after the vessel had begun to move. Then the wound in her breast was discovered. The vessel turned back to the quay. The Empress was carried back to her hotel. She was still living when Drs. Golay and Teisset

arrived. But they were helpless. The Empress died in the familiar fashion, by fatal compression of the heart as a result of accumulated blood in the pericardium.

When I considered how much time had been lost which might have been used to save the Empress's life, I was swept once more by my old impatience with surgical inertia. I spoke about this to Rehn. He expressed the hope that he might live to see cardiac surgery the general property of medical men.

But as we talked together, we found ourselves smiling at our own impatience. Rehn had opened up for the surgeon a part of the human body which had hitherto been considered an inviolate sanctum. Henceforth there would be no stopping the surgeon's scalpel.

But the story of the surgical conquest of the unexplored areas of the human body lies beyond the limits of this book. It includes such triumphs as surgery of the lung, thyroid gland, gall bladder, intestines, prostate gland, larynx and eye; the discovery of X-rays and local anaesthesia; and finally, the surgery of the spinal cord, the nerves and the brain.

To the creation of this new surgery, scientists from all continents and all nations have contributed. When their story is told some day, it could justly bear the title "The Global Empire of Surgery."



Jürgen Thorwald

JÜRGEN THORWALD was born in the German Rhineland in 1916. He originally studied medicine, and later history, in England and France as well as in Germany. "I gave up medicine," he says, "because I was less hard-boiled than I am today."

In 1941 he was commissioned in the German Navy, where, under a plan then current, he was trained as a war correspondent. An eyewitness of many decisive events, he wrote *It Started on the Weichsel* and *It Ended on the Elbe,* accounts of the Russian invasion of East Germany and the fall of Berlin. Since the war, Thorwald has pursued his journalistic career as an editor for the journal *Christ und Welt,* and on illustrated weeklies. His account of the flight of East Germans before the Communists, *Flight in the Winter,* was published in this country in 1953.

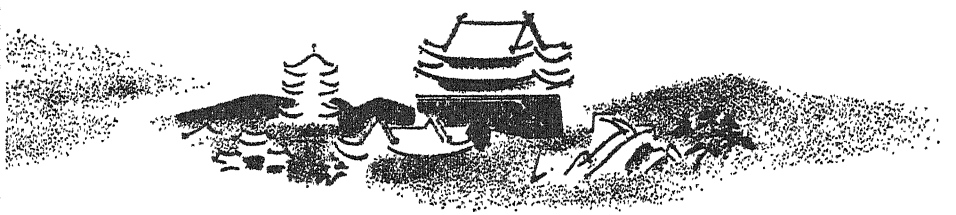
Mr. Thorwald now lives in the Bavarian Alps with his wife and young son.

LETTER FROM PEKING



Illustrations by Howard Willard

Letter From Peking



A condensation of the book by

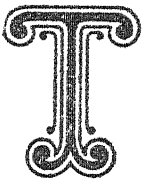
PEARL S. BUCK

"Letter From Peking" is published by Methuen, London

THE LETTER from Red China had come to Elizabeth MacLeod by a devious and dangerous route; her husband, Gerald, had risked his life to write it. Though separated from him by barriers of race and of revolution, Elizabeth remained deeply bound to him in love. As she quietly tended her Vermont farm, the mystery of his letter, and the predicament into which it plunged her, remained a tormenting secret.

As rhythmically as season follows upon season, this novel of a woman's courage and devotion moves towards a climax that is surprising—and yet inevitable.

"A most moving book, told with great compassion." —*Reynolds News*



HE YEAR is 1950, the month is September, and the day the twenty-fifth. The place? It is this valley in the mountains of Vermont, where I was born and where I lived all through my childhood. I crossed the seas, I made my love's country my own. Then came war, and I was an alien in spite of love, and I returned again to the valley.

Half an hour ago I walked down our country road, under the arch of maples, red and gold, to meet the postman. He comes only three times a week to this remote spot in the mountains of Vermont, and three mornings a week I wake early and restless. There is always a chance that a letter will come from Peking, a letter from Gerald. For months no letter has come. But this morning there was a letter. The postman singled it out and gave it to me.

"Here's what you're waitin' for," he said.

I would not open it until he was gone. Then, alone under the arching maple trees blazing with autumn fire, I opened the envelope. I knew, as I read, that I had been expecting this letter. No, rather, I knew that it could not surprise me. Nothing that Gerald does can surprise me, or shock me, or even hurt me. I have loved him. I do love him and shall always love him.

I read the letter, over and over again. In the silent autumn air, no wind stirring, the bright leaves floated down. I could hear Gerald's voice speaking the words he had written.

MY DEAR WIFE:

First, before I say what must be said, let me tell you that I love only you. Whatever I do now, remember that it is you I love. If you never receive a letter from me again, know that in my heart I write to you every day.

As I read these words I knew what must follow. I read to the end, and then, Gerald's voice echoing in my ears, I walked home. The house is empty after Rennie leaves for school. I am glad for this loneliness. I am now in my room, at my desk, writing. I have locked the letter into a secret drawer of the desk. I will forget it. At least for a while let me forget, until the numbness has gone from my heart. This is my comfort, to write down all I feel, since there is no one to whom I can speak.

This morning dawned like any other day. I rise early nowadays. Our neighbour farmers rise at four and sleep soon after twilight, as the Chinese farmers do. But Gerald likes the quiet while others sleep, and so I have learned to go late to bed. The night hours in our Chinese house were sweet. The street sounds died after dark, and over the low compound walls the voice of a two-stringed violin floated into our courts. It was made by our neighbour, Mr. Hua, who was a merchant in a nearby silk shop. In summer Gerald and I sat under the pine tree by the goldfish pool, and we let Rennie, our son, stay with us past all sensible bedtime for a child. He is our only son.

Our daughter died in babyhood. In the morning she was laughing, and by night she was gone. I do not know why she died. The sorrow was part of the price I paid for loving Gerald and going with him to China.

For a long time, it seemed very long, we were childless. I grieved but I was saved by Gerald's grief. I thought he would never cease mourning for our lost child. For months he could not sleep and he ate so little that his tall frame, always slender, was skeleton. I suppressed my tears to listen to his grieving. "I should have stayed in your country," he said. "If we had lived in America, our daughter would not have died. I have robbed you of too much."

I leaned my head upon his breast. "Wherever you go, there I go."

He looked at me strangely. "This is the difference between American women and Chinese women. You are more wife than mother."

"When I am with you I am all wife," I said. "And besides, you would never have been happy in America."

I knew it then and I know it now. Though in Peking I was often homesick in fleeting moments for the clean cool mountains of Vermont, I was happy there. It is a jewel of a city, richly set, gilded with time and history, the people courteous and gay, and I saw my life stretching ahead of me in peace and beauty, and there, I supposed, I would be buried by Gerald's side, both of us old and full of years.

Yet here I am, in this Vermont village of Raleigh, in a lonely farmhouse, with Rennie, our son, seventeen years old. And now, I do not think I shall ever see Gerald again.

As I said, the day began as any other does. I rose at six, I helped Matt milk our four cows and I set the can on the barn stoop for the milk truck to pick up, saving the big pewter pitcher full for Rennie. Then I went into the kitchen and made his breakfast. I have returned to the hours of my childhood upon this land which belonged to my grandfather and then to my father, and now is mine.

My father was an inventor in a minor way, scamping his farm-work to build "contraptions," as he called them. Two or three were fairly successful, an egg-washing machine, for example. But we fed from the farm and for cash depended upon a legacy left to my father by his father, who was a famous lawyer. My father was already dead when Gerald and I were married, and my mother lived here alone. She died before Rennie was born and left me the farm, and Matt Greene took care of it while I was in Peking, and he comes every day as he always has. For when we saw that we must part, Gerald and I, it was to this place that I returned.

Rennie came down this morning, his cheeks rosy from the cold air of windows open in his bedroom. "Good morning, Mother," he said, and kissed my cheek.

"Good morning, son," I said.

This ritual his father has always insisted upon.

"When you leave the presence of your parents," Gerald instructed his son, "you must say good-bye to them, you must tell them where you go, and upon your return you must show yourself before them and inquire how they are. This is filial piety."

"How are you this morning, Mother?" Rennie inquired.

"Very well, thank you," I said.

"I hope you slept?"

"I did, thank you," I said.

We smiled at each other, Rennie and I, remembering Gerald. Rennie looks like his father. He is tall for his age. Hair and eyes are black, and his skin, smooth as only Chinese ancestors can bequeath, is the colour of Guernsey cream. His profile is beautiful, the features subtly subdued and yet strong.

"Sit down, son," I said. "Your breakfast is ready."

Breakfast for Rennie is a monumental meal. He heaps his oatmeal with brown sugar and rich milk. Gerald has forbidden white sugar, and in Peking we used only the dark Chinese sugar. Milk is American, but Rennie is American too, his Chinese blood only one-fourth of his ancestral inheritance. His body is not Chinese. He is strong-boned, his hands and feet are well shaped but big, and he has not his father's elegant structure.

"Three eggs, please," he said as usual.

It is a good thing I have hens. My small legacy would not suffice for eggs and meat on the scale my son enjoys. . . . I must not so soon begin to say mine. Rennie is also Gerald's son. But I do not know how much the letter will change my life.

The dining-room window looks on to the road, conveniently, and from his seat at the head of the table Rennie can see the school bus coming. At first we left the seat empty, against the time when husband and father might sit there. For when we left Gerald on the wharf at Shanghai, he said he might join us in three months. At the end of three months he said nothing of his coming, and his letters were already weeks apart. So, because he could see the road, Rennie said he would take his father's chair for the present, and I did not say yes or no.

Perhaps I knew already that the letter was on its way.

"There's the bus," Rennie shouted. His eggs and bacon were gone, so were three slices of brown toast and butter, and he drank down his second glass of milk and reached for his windcheater and cap.

"Good-bye, Mother!"

"Good-bye, son," I said.

When Rennie learned from American children in Shanghai to say Mom or Ma, Gerald was stern.

"Mother is a beautiful word," he said gravely. "You shall not corrupt it."

He spoke in Chinese as he always does when he wishes to teach his son, and Rennie obeyed.

When I was alone, the house silent about me, I washed the dishes and then went upstairs to make the beds. My room, the one my parents used, stretches across the front of the house. It has five windows and the landscape changes with every day and hour. This morning when I rose at six the golden moon, round and huge, was sinking behind the wooded mountains. The level rays made black shadows from the pointed cedars upon the grey rocks beneath. I loved the safety of our compound walls in Peking, but I love this landscape better. Without Gerald, I chose my own country. With him any land serves and all are beautiful.

I made the big four-poster bed and dusted the dressing-tables and chests of drawers and the white-painted chimney-piece. I wonder sometimes that I labour so easily in this house, when in our Chinese house I needed five servants, or thought I did. Gerald did not like to see me work with my hands. It is true that I have nice hands. It was the first thing he said to me. "You have lovely hands."

"Have I?" I asked stupidly. No, not stupidly, for I wanted to hear him say it again.

"American girls do not usually have good hands. I notice this because my mother, being Chinese, had exquisite hands."

Perhaps he began to love me because my hands made him think of his mother's. How can I know now?

It has been nearly three months since I have had a letter from Gerald —until today. The letter is posted from Hong Kong, and it is inside an envelope addressed by a strange hand.

"You must not worry if my letters are far apart now," Gerald writes. "I cannot tell you the difficulties, I cannot even tell you how this letter reaches you. When you answer, do not send the letter to me, but to the address on the envelope. It may be months before I can reply."

Until the war with Japan came, we were never apart. Then, when it seemed that the northern provinces would fall easily to the enemy, Gerald said I must take Rennie to Chungking before the railway to Hankow was cut.

"Without you?" I cried.

"I will follow when I can," he said. "I cannot leave until the college leaves with me."

He was the president of the university, and responsibility was heavy upon him. I knew he was right, and Rennie and I set forth for Chungking. It was not an easy journey. The train was crowded with refugees, who clung even upon the roofs of the carriages, and the hotel in Hankow was full of the escaping rich and their retinues. I made the most of the dying prestige of the white man and found a tiny space for Rennie and me, and by urgency and bribes I bought passage upon the small steamer that makes the perilous journey up the Yangtse gorges to Chungking.

Thither Gerald was to follow, and he did, months later, his students and faculty with him. Meanwhile Rennie and I had found a small house in the hills above the city. Oh, the joy of reunion with the beloved! He came in, so gaunt he seemed to have added inches to his height. But he was content. His students and faculty had stayed with him, he had led them to safety. The city gentry had given him the use of several ancient ancestral halls, and all were housed.

When I put my arms about him that day I felt him tremble and knew how tired he was.

"Here you can rest," I told him.

He looked about the home I had made. I have a passion for big rooms. When I first found the brick farm-house near Chungking, I told the



owner that I would take it only if he allowed me to tear out two partitions in the main building and make three rooms into one. Therefore the room that Gerald saw was large and comfortable. We had brought nothing with us from Peking, but I knew how to find what I needed in the small shops of any Chinese city. Chinese craftsmen are skilled and they love beauty.

"You have the genius of a homemaker," Gerald said. He sat down in a cushioned wicker chair and leaned his head back.

"It is heaven," he said, and closed his eyes.

I cannot write for crying——

It is the first day of February. For weeks our Vermont landscape has been winter-bound, the mountains white and the valley silent under snow. Three days ago a warm wind and sunshine melted the snow, a deceptive thaw, for winter will come back again. We have some of our deepest snows in March, and even in April. Sometimes the spring sugaring is delayed for days because the sap freezes on its way down to the sugar-house. Today the valley is hidden in mist and the mountains have vanished. I can see no farther than the gate to the front garden. My father put up the fence for my mother, who, brought up in Boston, could not bear the frightening distances she saw from the windows of this house, the mountains rolling away.

"I must live behind a gate," she told my father, "else how do I know where I belong?"

He put up the fence, enclosing plenty of lawn and the clump of white birch. My mother was a pretty woman. But she was rigid in mind and body. She demanded fences and gates and she seldom went beyond them. When I told her I wanted to marry Gerald MacLeod she was not pleased. She did not want me to marry.

"There is much in marriage that is distasteful to a nice woman," she said when I asked her why she did not want me to marry. "Although MacLeod is a good name," she added.

I considered whether I would tell her that Gerald was half Chinese. He can pass for a dark Caucasian, for while his eyes are slightly almond-shaped, they are large and his brows are handsome. He is far more beautiful as a man than I am as a woman. I am small and fair and my

eyes are grey. I have never been sure I was pretty. Gerald has not told me I was pretty.

"Your skin is exquisite."

"Your mouth is very sweet."

Such words he has said, but never declaring beauty.

But if I considered concealing Gerald's Chinese blood, it was only for a moment. My mother was exceedingly acute. She could surmise what she did not know. I said, carefully casual:

"Gerald's father lives in Peking. He is American but he married a Chinese lady and so Gerald is half Chinese."

My mother's little mouth opened with horror.

"Oh, Elizabeth—no!"

Only my mother called me Elizabeth. Gerald calls me Eve. It is his love name for me. By others I am called by every possible variation.

"Eve," he said, that day when we were newly betrothed, "you are my first love."

"Shall I call you Adam?" I asked half playfully.

He looked half amused, half cynical. "I doubt that Christians would concede the name to a Chinese," he remarked.

"You insist upon being Chinese, but you aren't—not by half," I retorted. "And please, when you meet my mother, be the American half."

He became very Chinese at this, and made a show of being inscrutable and polite and evasive, all with humour, and I did not know how he would behave to my mother. I sorrowed that my father was dead, for he would have enjoyed Gerald. The windows of my father's mind were open to the world.

I should have trusted Gerald, for when he met my mother, he appeared before her as an extremely handsome young American, his Chinese ancestry escaping only in his natural grace, and in the straightness of his sleekly brushed, very black hair. Even his eyes were alert and frank. Sometimes they were Chinese in their look, revealing the self-contained and sometimes distant person who lives within the soul of my beloved. He won her cool little heart, so far as it could be won.

This is not to say that she had no misgivings. More than once after that she summoned me to her room late at night, and there she sat in the Windsor chair, wrapped in her grey flannelette dressing-gown and her hair in black kid curlers.

"Elizabeth, I have a dread fear that when you have a child it will look Chinese."

"He might look like the MacLeods," I suggested.

"There's no guarantee," she retorted, "and how I could bear to have a Chinese grandchild I do not know. I could not explain it in Boston."

For my mother was never a true Vermonter but always a citizen of Boston, spiritually and mentally.

"Don't worry, Mother," I said. "Gerald and I will live in Peking."

This startled her. "You'll never go and live in China!" she remonstrated.

"Didn't you come and live in Vermont?" I parried.

"But China," she persisted. "I never knew anyone to go to Peking."

"Grandmother MacLeod went," I told her. "When Gerald was small she visited his parents in Peking and she liked it so well that she stayed until she died. What's more, she's buried there."

"She couldn't help dying, wherever she was," my mother declared grimly.

"She wanted to be buried there—Gerald says so."

My mother could only sigh. "I'll never go to Peking."

"You might," I said gaily. I was too happy to be anything but gay in those days.

She was right. She never went to Peking. Within a year after Gerald and I were married, she died of pneumonia and I remembered what she had said every winter, drawing her grey shawl about her.

"These Vermont winters will be the death of me," she always said, and, in the end, it was true. She was winter-killed, but part of it was the winter she carried in her own soul, wherever she was.

TODAY the valley lies under a scintillating sun and the warmth of it draws the mists from the melting snow. I dread the spring this year. It is useless now to watch and wait for the postman. I shall never get another letter from Gerald. When Matt brought in the post this morning, I said, "Put it on the desk in the office." But I went to look, just the same.

I was busy, for we have the orchard to prune before the sap begins to run in the sugar-bush. We raise good apples, old-fashioned and sound.

My favourites are the pound apples, each weighing a pound, or very nearly, red-skinned and crisp and a nice balance between sour and sweet. When I bite into one I remember that Gerald does not like apples. Chinese apples are pithy and tasteless, but even our good American apples could not tempt him. And once when I brought him a plate of Bartlett pears he did not finish even one.

"They are soft," he said. "The pears in Peking are as crisp as celery and full of clear juice."

"Then they are not pears," I said to tease him.

"Wait and see," he said. For by then we knew we would be married. And when I did eat Peking pears they were delicious and they held their freshness all through the winter.

We have pruned all day, Matt and I. He is a silent fellow, a Vermonter, lank and lean, his teeth gone too early from a wretched diet. He looks upon my brown bread and green salads with distaste and, though I press him to share my luncheon, he sits apart and munches what he calls lunch meat between two huge slabs of white bread. Matt knows of my years in China and doubtless he wonders about Gerald but he never asks me a question that does not pertain to the farm. Save for this, his conversation consists of bits of bad news from the valley. Today we did not talk long. "I want to finish the orchard before Rennie comes home from school," I said. And we went back to work.

And so I prune my apple trees, remembering that fruit is borne on the small and twiggy branches, and never on the bold young growth. Saw and shears I can use well enough, and I take the large branches first, cutting upward for an inch or two, lest the wood split. When the saw is sharp, my neighbours say, it is time to prune the fruit trees, a saying true enough, for during the winter I oil the tools and sharpen the saws and the scythe. I have an old-fashioned wheel of sandstone that does well for the larger tools, but the small ones I sharpen by hand against a strip of flint.

RENNIE asks me every few days, "Mother, no letter?"

I shake my head. "I am afraid it is getting difficult for your father," I say. "The anti-American feeling in China is growing under the skilful Communist propaganda."

Rennie muses, "What is Communism, really?"

And I tell him of Karl Marx, the strange little man who lived his narrow little life, and somehow managed, by the power of his wayward brain, to lay hold upon millions of human lives.

"Even our lives, Rennie," I said. "Because of him we are separated, you from your father and I from my husband."

"And can my father not free himself?" he asked.

How could I answer? "I suppose," I said, "if our country, here, went Communist we'd stay, believing in our past and in our future."

"I don't know even if this is my country," he said.

"It is yours because it is mine," I said. "And let that be the end of it."

It is not the end. Rennie will have to choose his own country.

Sooner or later I shall have to tell him that I have his father's last letter upstairs, locked in the secret drawer of my mother's desk. But I put off the day. Rennie went on talking this evening after our supper, which we ate by the kitchen fire-place. A crane is built into it and a great pot hangs from the crane, in which I heat water when electricity fails in a summer thunderstorm. "I should think my father could get a letter to us somehow," Rennie continued.

"We do not know what rigours are imposed upon him," I replied. "It is dangerous for him that his father is American."

"Where is my grandfather MacLeod?" Rennie asked.

I keep a wooden bowl of apples on the kitchen table and while Rennie talked he was biting deeply into the white flesh of a red Baldwin.

"He's in Kansas. We shall have to go and find him one of these days," I said. "And do you forget that you used to call him Baba?"

I had planned long ago to visit Gerald's father. It was one of my beloved's last requests to me that day when we stood on the dock in Shanghai.

"Go and see my father and take Rennie with you," Gerald bade me. "It will comfort him to see his grandson."

"Is that why you are sending us to America?" I demanded.

"One reason among others," he replied.

"In that case I will stay here," I retorted.

"You must go," Gerald said, "and Rennie must go with you."

And then reluctantly he said what we both knew and had never spoken aloud. "Your lives will not be safe if you stay here."

I saw him glance about him as he spoke. For the first time Gerald was afraid. He had gone through war and bombing without a qualm.

"What of you?" I asked and certainly I was afraid.

"Half of me is Chinese," he said. "I shall make that serve."

"But will They?" We already called the Communists "They."

"I shall become indispensable," he replied.

I wished with all my heart that this conversation had taken place when we were at home in Peking, in our bedroom, the doors locked, the windows closed. Then I could have thrown myself on his breast and forced the truth from him. But I was standing beside him on the dock, the wind blowing my hair, and I could only ask in a stupid low voice that conveyed no passion, "And why, Gerald, do you wish to make yourself indispensable here?"

"One has to choose," he said.

There was no time for more. The tug was waiting to take us to the ship, and in the silent crowd upon the small vessel it would not have been safe to talk. I kept thinking, when had it become dangerous to talk? At what moment had the people, and among them ourselves, ceased to be gay and communicative? When had they become silent and afraid? The change was gradual, but when it came it was absolute. And it had culminated in the silence between Gerald and me when we parted.



I CANNOT sleep the nights through. I get up and prowl about the house, careful not to wake Rennie. He guesses that something is wrong, but he thinks I grieve because I have not heard from his father for so many months.

He says to me, "Mother, I am sure there are many letters waiting in some forgotten place. You know how the postmen are over there. They sit down to eat a bowl of hot rice, or they lie under a tree to sleep."

Actually this is not true. The postal service to and from Peking was always excellent, and I suppose it is no worse now. It was organized by the English, who are always thorough.

I smile and say, "Of course you are right, and I will not worry. No news is good news."

It is a true old proverb.

How much better it would be now if I had not this letter lying like a live thing in the secret drawer of my desk! I have sealed it with red sealing wax, lest by some impossible chance Rennie might be rummaging one day and find it.

Last night I was too lonely. I am still a wife, but without my husband. When a man dies, his widow dies by so much, too, perhaps. If her love has been great, a part of her dies and it can never be reborn with another man. But I am not a widow. In the night I lie in my solitary bed and all my dreams fly across the sea. I walk the well-known street to our gate. It is barred but, bodiless, I go through and cross the courtyard and enter the locked door. The gateman does not wake. He cannot hear me, nor could he prevent me if he did. There is my home. It is as I left it, believing that surely I would come back. Gerald and I cannot be parted. That is what I believed.

I said to the servants, "Keep everything as I have it."

"We will," they promised.

"Do not forget," I said. "Our master must have hot food when he comes in at night, however late the hour."

"Never, never can we forget," they promised.

"I shall return," I said.

"Our mistress will return," they said.

Now, remembering, my soul passes swiftly through the rooms to the bedroom where Gerald lies asleep. Is he alone? Is he still alone? My soul stands fearful at the door.

I get out of bed and I open the secret drawer of the desk. I break the seal I set. I read the opening words again.

"Let me tell you that I love only you."

I bend my head and weep. Is it not enough that he has written these words?

My heart unanswered, I seal the letter once more and I put it away in the secret drawer. I cannot return to my bed. When a woman is widowed by death, does passion die? But Gerald is not dead. He is there, in our house. He comes home at night, he eats and sleeps and wakes to rise again. He looks upon this same moon which shines outside my window now.

Surely, surely he knows. He knows that I stand here by the window, that I look out at the moon, rising above the mists of a spring night. I remember, I remember——

Gerald, always too sensitive, was obsessed with a strange terror in those first days when he had barely spoken to me of love. He feared that I might be offended.

I cried out against him. "Oh darling, how silly you are!"

I was saying "darling" long before he could bring himself to speak the word. When he began to call me by endearing names, it was not easily and, in the presence of others, never.

I remember the look in his grave dark eyes.

"I can live without your love," he said, "but I could not live if, having had it, I should lose it. This is why I dare not ask you to marry me."

"I shall always love you," I cried.

It was on such a night as this, a moonlight night, that we spoke. The spring was late that year and we had lingered under the birch trees to be alone and away from my mother, and I was cold and he opened his coat and put it about my shoulders and I walked in his shelter.

In June he had his degree from Harvard. My mother came to Commencement and I was singing proud to hear the honours he received. *"Summa cum laude"*—the words were spoken again and yet again. My mother was warmer than I had ever seen her towards him when he came striding towards us, still in his cap and gown. There was no man there to equal him in beauty. For the moment his reserve was gone. He was triumphant and happy and he caught our hands, my mother's and mine.

"Thank you for coming," he said. "Without you, I should have had no family. I'd have been lonely."

"Congratulations," my mother said.

She pressed his hand in both hers, but I stood on tiptoe and kissed his cheek. It was the first time I had kissed him before my mother and he blushed and glanced at her and smiled when she did not reprove me.

We had dinner together that night, the three of us, at a Chinese restaurant in Boston, where he had already ordered our meal, and my mother condescended to taste one strange dish after another. I ate everything, liking all, and Gerald laughed at me and loved me and I knew it, in spite of his careful reserve.

He came home with us the next day, and by evening we were in the house. It was a clear night, the air cool and sweet as only the air of the mountains can be, and my mother said she was tired, and she went to bed.

Gerald and I sat late on the stone terrace my father had built the summer before he died, and somehow I fell to talking about him.

"I wish he could know about you," I said.

"What about me?" Gerald asked. He held my hand now, his hand cool and firm.

"I wish, I wish my father could know the man who is to be my husband," I said.

A bold thing I was, but I knew that Gerald loved me.

He sat silent for a time, holding my hand. Then he rose from the bench where we were sitting and he drew me up to him and kissed me as never before had he kissed me.

It was I who broke away from that long kiss. "Now we are engaged," I whispered.

We sat down again and he talked to me of Peking, and for the first time he spoke of his mother. She had not been a beautiful woman, he said, but she had extraordinary grace. Her hands were delicate and always fragrant. He remembered their scent when she smoothed his cheeks.

"Chinese women do not kiss their children as Western women do," he said. "They nuzzle them and smell them when they are babies. When I grew out of babyhood she smoothed my cheeks with both her hands. Her palms were soft and sweet."

"Who was she," I asked, "and how did she come to marry your father?"

"I think," he said, "that my father was disappointed in love. The

American woman he wanted to marry would not go to China with him, or was forbidden to go by her parents. She was not strong enough to disobey them, I suppose. He went to China alone and he lived alone for ten years. And then, you know how the Chinese are——" He caught himself. "No, how can you know how the Chinese are? Well, they think every man and woman must marry for it is what Heaven ordains, and there can be no health in a people unless there is health in the individual man and woman. So Chinese friends besought my father to marry, and his best friend, who is my uncle Han Yu-ren, offered him his sister. She was not young. She was, in a way, a widow. The man to whom she had been betrothed as a child, by her parents, died a week before the wedding. Had she been less independent, I suppose she would have followed tradition and never married. She might even have become a nun."

"She was willing to marry an American?" I asked.

"That is what drew my father to her," Gerald said. "Most young Chinese women would not have accepted a foreign man."

"Had she seen your father?" I asked.

"Once," he said, "when my father visited his friend's house, she was in the main hall. He did not notice her."

"Your father is very handsome," I reminded him. He had once shown me his father's picture. "Were they happy?" I persisted.

He considered the question.

"They had a measured happiness. It was impossible to be altogether unhappy with my mother. She was never gay but never sad, and she created order wherever she was."

"Is order so important?" I cried. For I am not orderly by nature.

"There is no dignity to life except with order," Gerald said.

We talked thus slowly and thoughtfully, our hands clasped. The moon was high and the mountains were clear against the sky.

We heard the grandfather clock in the hall strike twelve and we rose together and went into the house and up the stairs. At the head of the stairs we paused. He took me in his arms and kissed me again, not passionately but gently and with deep tenderness.

Then he went into the guest-room and shut the door. And I went to my own room and closed the door behind me. A calm happiness pervaded me.

I FIND I must not dwell upon memory or it becomes unbearable. I am thankful that the sap has begun to run in the sugar-bush for I have no choice now but to be busy. Rennie has permission to stay away from school for a few days. His grades are high. Matt, Rennie and I work from dawn to dark and at night I am too tired to dream. I think of cutting off my long hair because today it fell down my back, the hairpins failing to hold in the wind.

"I shall certainly cut this off," I cried, seizing the long tail of hair and twisting it against my head.

The wind carried my words to Rennie and he cupped his hands and called to me.

"You shall not, either!"

Later when we were eating our luncheon I asked him why he would not let me cut my hair and he said because he did not like a short-haired woman.

"I am only your mother," I said.

"Short-haired mother, then," he retorted and laughed at me.

I wonder if Gerald laughed as easily when he was a boy. There is no one to tell me. I had no sooner written those words than I thought, there is Gerald's father. He will remember. As soon as this sugaring is finished, Rennie and I will go and find Gerald's father. I want him here so that I can talk about his son.

Gerald's father left Peking before the Japanese entered. He said that he could not bear to see it. He went to a small town in Kansas, Little Springs. I have no idea how he lives now. He has written to us once, soon after we came to Vermont, and wanted news of Gerald, which I gave. He has not replied.

I said to Rennie the next day, "Rennie, how would you like to have your grandfather MacLeod come and live with us?"

"I shall have to think about it," Rennie said. He is prudent, this boy, cautious and careful.

The days passed while he thought and we had no time to talk. Sugaring is hard work but we are fortunate because my father tapped the trees and laid pipes throughout the bush, and those pipes run into three main pipes through which, by force of gravity, the sap is conveyed to a small sugar-house in the valley. Now Rennie and I, with Matt's help, make our sugar with twice the ease our neighbours do. They see and wonder

and sometimes give spare praise to my father, but none of them do likewise. They continue to carry buckets as they have always done and as their ancestors did.

In the warm sunlit days sap runs fast into the sugar-house. When that begins, Rennie and Matt do the outside work and I stay in the sugar-house.

We eat then from our stores of food, eating what was put up earlier in the glass jars of summertime and harvest. We drop into sleep immediately after supper, Rennie's cheeks burnt with wind and snow and mine with fire.

Today, however, winter has returned. The sap is frozen and the roads are drifting with deepening snow. We can rest, Rennie and I, and Matt has taken over the sugar-house for the time being.

We dallied over our breakfast and Rennie picked up a book. I interrupted him.

"Rennie, have you thought about your grandfather coming to live with us?"

He looked up from the window-seat where he was lying, the book propped on his breast.

"I have thought," he said. "I'd like it." And he went back to his book.

Son of Gerald! He has thought, in silence he has decided, and it is as good as done.

When the dishes were washed I went upstairs to consider the room the grandfather would have. The house is too big for us, it could house a dozen children.

Half stone, half timber, it stands facing the south and the valley. Every summer someone from New York or Chicago wants to buy it from me. I am offered a fortune large enough so that we need never sugar again. And I always refuse.

So now I walk the wide upstairs hall and reflect upon the rooms. I choose the corner at south and east. Rennie has the south-west room, because he likes to sleep on holidays and does not want the wakening sun. But an old man will not sleep late and this is the room. It is square, it has four windows, and a fire-place stands between the two to the east. Deep window-sills and seats beneath them, a floor of wide pine planks, walls papered a faded pink. My mother chose this room when she was old and her furniture is here, Victorian walnut, and the white ruffled

curtains that she made and hung. The bed is absurdly large, the headboard high and scrolled and the footboard solid. It is a good room for an old gentleman.



We could not go until the sugaring was over. It was interrupted by an ice storm. In March, mid-season, a warm rain poured upon us from a low grey sky. We were frightened lest the sap cease to flow, the trees deceived by seeming spring. Then sudden winds blew gusts of cold southward from Canada, and the rain froze upon the trees. Sap was assured, but alas, winds crashed the big trees. Sleepless in the night I heard the crack of breaking branches, as sharp as gun shots, and almost as dreadful. In the morning the sun shone again and Rennie and I walked through the sugar-bush to see what we had lost. Icicles of frozen sap hung from the ends of the broken branches and melting in the sun they dripped their sweetness upon the earth below. I detest waste and

here was waste, but then Rennie reminded me that a tree is prudent and never gives up all its sugar.

"At least we can enjoy the beauty," I said. So we stood on top of the mountain behind our house and surveyed the glittering landscape.

For six weeks of hard work, we had a hundred gallons of amber-clear maple syrup, to be boiled later into sugar.

When the buds began to swell in April, the season was over, and I told Matt that he must tend the spring ploughing alone, for Rennie and I were going to Kansas. We would be back, I told him, before the seeds he planted could sprout.

Rennie and I set forth on our journey. I tried to create an image of his grandfather for Rennie as plains and mountains flew across the windows of the train, but it was dim even in my own mind. I saw everyone through the bright mists of my love for Gerald. I am one of the fortunate women who marries her first love.

The first run of maple syrup, John Burroughs says, is like first love, "always the best, always the fullest, always the sweetest, while there is a purity and delicacy of flavour about the sugar that far surpasses any subsequent yield."

"Your grandfather," I told Rennie, "is tall and very thin and aristocratic in his appearance. He comes from Virginia, where his forebears emigrated early from Scotland. It is a wonder that he ever married a Chinese lady."

Rennie withdrew by the slightest movement. He does not wish to talk about his Chinese grandmother. I suspect the prejudices of his schoolfellows may be creeping into his soul. If so, then Gerald's father will help me.

"Your grandfather had dark hair and dark eyes, like your father," I went on. "His hair is probably silver-white by now. Can you remember him at all?"

"I don't remember," Rennie said stubbornly. Whenever we speak of the life we lived in Peking he does not remember. He wants to be American.

The landscape passes too quickly by the window. Some day I shall travel slowly over the miles we whirl over now. I would like to stop at every village and town and walk on the country roads that wind away from us in an instant. Last night in my berth I pulled the curtain aside

and gazed out into the moonlight. I did not know where we were. My nation is so vast that within its endless borders even I can be a stranger. I ought not to blame Gerald that he does not come here, lest he be exiled.

I wept on his bosom that last night in the Shanghai hotel. "Why won't you come with me?" I sobbed. "What is it here that you love better than your wife?"

"No one and nothing," he said. "Consider, my Eve, that if I leave China now it would be for ever. And I'd be a stranger in America."

"I'd be there," I cried.

"Though you were there," he said gravely.

At midnight, in the vastness of the land over which we sped, I felt myself a stranger, and I remembered what he said.

WE FOUND Gerald's father. He was living alone in a shack at the edge of a cluster of one-story houses in western Kansas. Little Springs is a small town, less than a town. It is on the high plains, half-way to the mountains. It was easy to find him, for when we asked at the station everybody knew him in a strange, respectful, doubtful sort of way.

The shirt-sleeved man at the ticket window, talking round the cud of tobacco in his mouth, directed us to the far end of the one street, and a mile beyond it in a one-room unpainted house we found Gerald's father. The door was open, although the air is chill here in April, and he was sitting inside at a rough table, wearing, of all things, his old padded Chinese gown and reading a Chinese book.

When he saw us he got to his feet in his formal fashion and stood there smiling. He has let his beard grow and his hair is too long. Both are silver-white. He is terribly thin and his eyes are huge. I never knew before how much he looks like Gerald. I flew to him and put my arms round him.

"Baba—why on earth are you here?"

He lifted his bent head, he recognized me, strangely without surprise, as though he did not know where he was. He did not embrace me but he did not push my arms away. He said in a mild distant voice, "I was taken ill on the train and they put me off here, and here perforce I stopped. There is no reason for me to live in one place rather than in another."

How selfishly Gerald and I lived on in the house in Peking in those perilous pre-war days! We knew we were selfish, and yet we clutched every doomed hour of happiness. Yet it is also true that we believed anyone who reached America had reached Heaven. We had a few letters from Baba, saying that he was comfortable and we were not to worry about him. And beset with our own worries, in wars and dangers, we simply let it go at that.

Baba was looking at Rennie and I stepped back.

"You remember your grandson," I said.

He put out his hand, a frail big hand, and I nodded to Rennie to bid him come forward.

"Gerald's son?" the old man inquired.

"Of course," I said. How much does he remember and how much is forgotten?

"Yes, yes," the grandfather murmured. "Sit down, sit down."

There were not two other seats and Rennie sat on the edge of the table and I upon a stool.

"Baba, how do you live?" I asked.

"They bring me food," he said vaguely. "A woman cleans my house and washes my clothes. I don't need money. People are kind here."

He does not know where he is. I suppose he simply got off the train ill and bewildered and somebody let him have this house.

"I have money," he was saying. He opened the drawer in the table and took out a small parcel wrapped in a piece of yellow Chinese silk and opening it he showed me five one-dollar bills. Then he wrapped it up again and put it in the drawer.

Rennie and I looked at each other. We agreed, without words. We must take Baba home with us, and without delay. There was one train east and one train west each day.

"Have you had your luncheon, Baba?" I asked. If we made haste we could still catch the eastward train.

"I think so," he replied.

"What did you eat?"

He got up slowly and went to an old-fashioned ice-box in the corner and opened it. I looked inside and saw a half-empty bottle of milk, a pat of butter, three eggs and a small meat pie, a wedge of which had been cut out.

Rennie was standing in the door, looking over the plains.

"Let's get going," he said.

I turned to Baba. "Will you come and live with us?"

He was sitting by the table again and he carefully closed the cloth-bound Chinese book.

"Do you wish me to come and live with you?" he inquired.

"More than anything," I said.

"Where is Gerald?" he asked.

"He is still in Peking."

"Will he return?"

"I—hope so."

"Someone is coming," Rennie said.

A man was walking towards us in long strides and in a moment was at the door, a man past youth and not yet middle-aged, tall and square-shouldered, sandy-haired, his skin the colour of his hair, a wind-blown Western face.

"I came down to see what was going on," he said in a hearty voice. "I keep an eye on my old neighbour."

"Are you the owner of this shack?" I asked.

"Yes—it's on my farm."

"It was good of you to take my father-in-law into shelter," I said.

"I don't know what to think of folks who let an old man wander about alone," he said severely.

"We had no idea——" I began and stopped.

How could I explain Peking, or even China? As well try to explain a distant planet!

"Now that we have found him," I said, "we will take him home." Then I remembered. "I am Mrs. Gerald MacLeod. This is my son, Rennie."

"I'm Sam Blaine," he said. But he was looking at Rennie. He was thinking that Rennie looked "different." Who, he was thinking, are these people?

"Where do you come from?" he asked.

"We live in Vermont," I said.

"Where's your husband?"

I hesitated. To say that Gerald wanted to stay in Communist China would be to bring down suspicion upon us all.

"He is abroad," I said.

Sam Blaine leaned against the door and looked us over thoughtfully. Then he spoke to Baba.

"Old friend, you recognize this lady and the boy?"

Baba nodded peacefully. "She is my son's wife. The boy is Gerald's son."

"You want to go with them?"

"I'll go with them."

"Not unless you want to—I'll look after you if you want to stay."

"I will go," Baba said.

"Well——" The tall man was doubtful. "If you say so——"

"If we hurry we can still catch the afternoon train," I said.

"I'll fetch my car. I'll be back in fifteen minutes." Sam Blaine strode off.

I saw now that Rennie was in distress. He was looking at his grandfather and making up his mind whether to speak.

"Well?" I inquired.

"Are you going to take him on the train wearing that Chinese gown?" my son demanded.

Baba surveyed himself.

"It's a very nice gown," he observed. "I bought it in Peking. The silk is still good. It is warm and soft."

"Mother!" Rennie cried.

"Baba, we will take the gown with us," I said. "But perhaps it will be best if we find your coat. Americans are not used to people who look different."

The gentle old man said nothing. Rennie was already reaching behind a curtain which hung against the wall and served as a wardrobe. He produced the dark-grey suit in which Baba had left Peking, and the dark overcoat Gerald had bought him at the English tailor's shop in the old Legation Quarter. They looked very little worn. Baba let Rennie help him into the grey suit and we put on his overcoat and found his black Homburg hat and he stood quite patient under our appraisal. I was not sure that he knew what was happening to him. He simply gave himself into our hands.

Dust and noise outside the door announced that Sam Blaine had returned. I had packed the suit-case and Rennie led his grandfather to

the car. Sam Blaine leaped out, and in half a minute we were in the car, red and chrome and monstrous, and as comfortable as a bed.

"I have never seen such a car," I said. I was in the front seat, and Rennie and Baba were behind.

"Made to order," Sam Blaine said. "My order."

He drove fast and I stopped talking. I shall never grow used to speed. Years of riding in rickshaws and mule carts have reduced my tempo permanently, perhaps.

We reached the station in time for the train, and Baba, supported by Rennie and Sam Blaine, was lifted up the steps.

"Good-bye, ma'am," Sam Blaine said, and wrenched my hand. "You might write to me, and tell me how the old man makes it."

"I will," I promised.

We settled ourselves into a compartment, Baba, Rennie and I. Then I was conscious of pain in my hand, the one Sam Blaine had held in his crushing grip.

MATT has dug the garden and ploughed our fields. I am experimenting this year by putting the land under permanent hay. Grass farming, I believe, is the only answer to our short season in these mountains. A hundred years ago men made fields among the rocks and tried to grow grain, and their fields have returned to wilderness. Eighteen thousand folk, the old records say, once gathered on the side of Mount Stratton to hear Daniel Webster speak. I doubted if eighteen hundred could gather now were Daniel Webster to rise from the grave. They have gone away, those folk, and their children and children's children are living their lives in distant places. They went away in search of home, even as I have returned to find my home.

For I am beginning to know that I shall never return to the house in Peking. It must cease to exist for me, though it stands as it has stood for centuries, a house encompassed by walls, and the gate in those walls is of heavy cedar, bound in solid brass. In and out of the gate the beloved comes and goes, but my roots there must die. I have returned to the land of my fathers. I ask myself if I should read Gerald's letter to Baba, and then cannot bear the thought of sharing my secret, not today. For this is our wedding day, Gerald's and mine, the fifteenth day of May, and I

have spent it in the fields, seeding grass for permanent cover, leaving Matt to clean the barn and milk the cows.

Twenty years ago today Gerald and I were married quietly in the big living-room. Then I went to China with him and I was drawn into its vast slumberous life. I felt at home there as everyone does. I do not know why it is so, but people came to visit Peking and stayed to live out their lives.

I tell myself that now all is changed, even in that eternal city. The long slumber is over. A terrible new energy possesses the people. I tell myself that they do not want me there. But I cannot believe that my friend Sumei does not love me any more, not when I remember how we nursed our babies together and talked and laughed and told each other what we had paid at the market that day for eggs and fish and fruits. I cannot believe that old Madame Li does not love me any more, she who often drew me down to sit beside her so that she could smooth my hands with hers. These were my friends, I love them still and surely they love me. They would say as Gerald says to me in the letter, "I love you and will aways love you, but——"

How can there be buts if love continues? That is the question I cannot answer. And silence lies between us.

When I came in to get supper Baba was enjoying the late sun on the kitchen terrace. He wears his Chinese gown every day, and he sits and reads his few old Chinese books and seldom speaks. The doctor in our valley, Dr. Bruce Spaulden, tells me he must have had a mild stroke when he was alone there in Little Springs.

Bruce Spaulden is a good man and a good doctor, very tall, an honest face, strong features. I have not had time to know him well.

"There's nothing to do," he said. "Simply take care of him as you are doing."

Bruce is never in a hurry, but not communicative. He had come to examine Baba at my request, because Baba is not the man I remember as Gerald's father. In Peking his mind was keen, cultivated, witty, the mind of a scholar. I was afraid of him and charmed by him when I went to live in his house with Gerald. He knew everything and information flowed from him with pure naturalness, never with condescension. The subtle mellowing which China seems to leave upon all who give themselves to her had reached perfection in him.

"Gerald, how can I ever please your father?" I cried on the first night we spent in the Peking house.

"My darling," Gerald said, "you need not try to please him. He is delighted with you because you don't pretend. Neither does he. You can take each other as you are."

Baba has still that naturalness and he has his old-fashioned courtesy. Without one word to Rennie he teaches his grandson the manners he is losing since he became an American schoolboy. Baba will not sit down at the table until I am seated. He is careful to tell me when he goes for one of his short walks into the sugar-bush and to tell me when he returns. He loves to walk slowly among the ferns now unrolling their fronds in a carpet of jade green beneath the trees.

Rennie comes home late because of baseball at school, and Baba sits in the kitchen with me and we talk. Oh, but it is different talk now. He is not childish but something has gone from him. The old scintillating wit is silent, the mind rests. He is sweet and gentle and easy to live with. He accepts his daily bread. I am not sure that he knows where he is. I think he forgets at times who I am. He looks at Rennie now and then with strange thoughtfulness. I feel he is inquiring of himself whether this is Gerald or Gerald's son, or even, sometimes, whether he knows him. . . . No, it would be cruel to show him Gerald's letter.

Tonight, when we had eaten our supper, Rennie was off again to go with his friends to the cinema. It is Saturday. So Baba and I were alone and I lit the lamp. I took up my knitting and sat down by the table and Baba remained in his arm-chair. And while I knitted a sweater for Rennie, I could not but think of Gerald. Never before, in the years since we parted, had our anniversary passed without a letter from him. Somehow or other he has managed to get a letter out to reach me in time for this night, and so to renew his love. I have the letters upstairs, in my sandalwood box. In other years I have read them all again, in full faith that some day our separation would end. I do not know whether I shall have the courage to read them tonight.

Baba sat quietly and watched me with patient eyes. I could not bear this and so I began to talk.

"Baba, tell me, can you remember when you married Gerald's mother?"

"I do remember her," he said. "Her name was Ai-lan. Her

surname was Han. She was a good woman and a good wife."

"How did you come to marry her?"

He pondered this, his eyes vague.

"I cannot remember," he said. "I was adviser then to the Young Emperor. My friend, Han Yu-ren, suggested her to me. He thought I was lonely, and he had a sister younger than I. She was Ai-lan."

"Were you in love, Baba?" I asked.

Again the pause. He sat there in my father's old brown leather armchair, the light of the lamp falling upon his Chinese gown of crimson silk, his hands folded upon his lap, and his white hair and beard shining, his eyes dark and troubled. He was trying to think.

"Never mind, Baba," I said. "It was all so long ago."

"It is not that I do not wish to tell you," he said. "I am trying to remember. I think I was in love, but not with Ai-lan. I was in love with someone else. I am trying to remember."

"Was she a Chinese lady?" I asked, knowing she was not.

"Not Chinese," he said. "I cannot remember her name."

Oh, what a thing to say! My knitting fell from my hands. To be in love and then to pass beyond even the memory of the beloved's name! Could Gerald one day, in Peking, years hence, forget even my name?

Baba began to talk again. "I was lonely because that one whose name I cannot remember did not return my love. And when Yu-ren said to me that he had a sister, I thought it might be a good thing to be married to a Chinese lady. She could help me, I thought, in my work with the Chinese."

I took up my knitting again. "Strange, was it not, that a Chinese lady should be unmarried?"

He said quite easily now, "She had been betrothed and her fiancé had died. I think Yu-ren said he had died when she was quite young. She was twenty-five when we were married and I was thirty."

"Wasn't it extraordinary that she was willing to marry a foreigner?" I had somehow opened a door into Baba's mind and I pressed my advantage. I wanted to know Gerald's mother. There was not even a picture of her in the Peking house. I knew that Gerald loved her painfully well, but I did not know why it was with pain.

The Vermont night was quiet about us, a lovely May night, moonless and soft. The house was silent. I felt no barrier between Baba and me

as he spoke with the simple words of a child, sometimes in English and sometimes in Chinese. It was strange and beautiful to hear the liquid tones of the ancient Peking language in this room.

• Here is the story Baba told me, sitting in the brown arm-chair, his long pale hands folded one upon the other, his eyes fixed on my face sometimes, and sometimes moving away to the darkening window, an old man reliving a handful of vivid years in his youth.

They had been married, he and Gerald's mother, according to the ancient Buddhist rites. Her parents were dead, and her elder brother, Han Yu-ren, was the head of the family. She had lived in the Han household, pursuing her studies.

"Was she beautiful, Baba?"

He considered this. "She was not," he said at last, "although there were times when she very nearly approached beauty. She was beautiful when she read aloud to me the ancient poetry she enjoyed. And also she played quite well upon her lute and she had a sweet melancholy voice. When she played in the evenings, she always wiped tears from her eyes. I do not know why she wept."

"After Gerald was born, was she happy?"

A vague trouble passed over Baba's face. "I do not know whether it can be called happiness. She was changed. She read no more poetry and she never again played her lute. Instead she became interested in the revolution. Until then she had paid no heed to political affairs. I do not remember that she ever read a newspaper before Gerald was born. But afterwards, she began to read new books and magazines. She became friendly with Sun Yat-sen. I remember we quarrelled over it."

"I cannot imagine you quarrelling, Baba," I said.

"I did not like Sun Yat-sen. I distrusted him. I was then the adviser to the Throne, you understand. I believed that the old form of government was the best. Besides, Sun was not educated in the classics. He had been only to missionary schools."

I was astonished to hear Baba speak so well. Something of the man I had known appeared before me. I put down my knitting to watch and to listen while he went on.

"She, who had been brought up in every ancient tradition, was suddenly another woman than the one I had married. As a Chinese lady she had never left our house. Now, as the child grew out of babyhood,

she began to go here and there to meetings. I knew she went to hear Sun Yat-sen. He was an upstart, the son of a Southern peasant, and I told her so. And then she accused me."

His voice trembled and he could not go on.

"Of what did she accuse you, Baba?"

He looked at me piteously, his lower lip trembling. "She said that I wished to keep the Emperor on the throne for the sake of my salary. She said I was a foreigner and our two races could never mingle. She said I was loyal to my own. She had been sweet and gentle, and now suddenly she was cruel and angry. She said I never loved her."

Ah, that was the reason for the change! She loved and knew she was not loved, and so she left her home and wandered where she could find shelter. I had not the heart to tell Baba what he did not know. Her heart had woken when she saw her son. This child, half white, she had borne in ignorance of his fate. Where was his place? She knew that if he went to the land of his father, she would be left without love. His place must be in her country and, that she might keep him, she would make a new country for him. Oh, I do not doubt that I am putting it very crudely. Doubtless she imagined she did all for the sake of her people. She listened to the old arguments, that her people were insulted, the land threatened by foreigners. But I know that we do what we do for secret reasons of our own. She wanted to keep her son.

"How old was Gerald when his mother died?" I asked.

Baba spoke with sudden promptness, surprising me.

"She did not die. She was killed."

"What!"

We sat staring at each other. I saw something terrible now in Baba's eyes, not sorrow, not vagueness. No, I saw fright.

"I warned her," he said. He was trembling under the thin silk of his gown. "I told her that I could not save her if she persisted. For she became a violent revolutionist—you understand? Not merely a patriot. She became one of Them."

"Baba—no!"

"Yes, yes! First she became a friend of the wife of Sun Yat-sen. The two women spent hours together, sometimes in my house. I forbade it at last. I was afraid for myself and for Gerald. I said, 'If you must meet with those traitors, it shall not be in my house, or in the presence of my

son.' And she took those two words and threw them back at me as one flings a dagger.

"'Your son!'"

I heard the Chinese voice as clearly as though she stood in this room. Thousands of miles and years away I heard the words.

"Oh Baba, go on!"

"She went out of my house and I never saw her again."

"She was not dead?"

"No—not then. I went to her brother and we searched for her. It was he who found her at last. But he would not tell me where she was. He said, 'It is better for you not to know.' I knew she was with Them in the South, where they were making the revolution."

"Did Gerald never see her again either?"

For all the time Baba was talking, I saw Gerald growing up in that great house, alone with his father, but dreaming, I suppose, of his mother. What child does not dream of his mother? When I had first finished college I taught for a year in an orphanage in New York, a foundling home for girls. Bed and crib lay side by side, rooms full of children who had been deserted and betrayed. By day they played and sometimes even laughed, but again and again at night I was waked by the dreadful sound of their weeping. For when a child moaned in her sleep she murmured "Mother," and the word woke every child of the twenty or thirty in the room, one and then another, and they wailed the word aloud. "Mother—Mother——" Who can assuage such grief? I gave up my job and went away, but I have never forgotten the weeping children, dreaming of their unknown mothers. The child Gerald, lonely in the house with his foreign father, takes his place with the weeping children.

"He did see his mother," Baba said, his answer to my question. "She was very correct about that. She would not see him secretly, but she asked whether Gerald might come to her."

"And were you willing?"

"Not at first. I did not wish his mind to be contaminated. She said that she would not teach him anything. I allowed him therefore to meet her. She came to Peking in order that she might see him in her ancestral home."

"Was it for hours or days?" I asked.

"Sometimes for hours, sometimes for days, depending upon what she considered her duties to Them. They always came first."

Ah, the child must have felt that. Gerald is over-sensitive to people.

"What I did not like," Baba was saying, "was that the child longed to live in his mother's ancestral house. He did not return willingly to me. I suppose that he was given sweets and made much of by servants and lesser relatives. You know how it is."

I did know. Those old Chinese families adore their men children. In the men children is their hope of eternal life. The boys are guarded and pampered and loved. They are absorbed into the mighty ocean of love, centuries old. Only the strongest and the most self-sufficient can emerge from such love into independent beings.

I think my dead child could have been such a one had she been a boy. But she was a girl. Her name was Ru-an. I try not to think of her. I have seen many children but never one like her. My first-born she was, and Gerald was Chinese enough so that I saw disappointment in his eyes when he came into the hospital room. She lay in the crook of my arm.

"Your daughter, sir," I said to Gerald. I was very happy, in love with my life, my husband, my house, the city of Peking, the country of China.

He sat down beside the bed and he gravely inspected the child. I saw he was doing his best to hide his disappointment.

"She is quite small," he said.

I was angry. "On the contrary, Gerald. She weighs eight pounds. Also she is intelligent."

"Intelligent," he murmured, staring at the round sleeping face.

"Yes." I yielded to him nearly always but I knew I would never yield to him about my daughter. She was to be beautiful, strong and intelligent. And so she was and so she continued to be, until she died.

Oh, let me not think of her death!

"Baba, you are tired," I said and I rolled up my knitting. "You must go to bed. We will talk another time."

"I have not finished. I have not told you how Gerald's mother was killed."

It was a dreadful death, that I could see. I saw it in his widened eyes staring at the dark window, the pinched whiteness about his nostrils, his tightened lips.

"She was shot," he said. He was trembling again.

"Baba—don't tell me! Don't think of it."

He went on as though I had not spoken. "In 1930, in Nanking, she was seized by order of the secret police of the Nationalist government. She was living alone. She had not accompanied her friend, Madame Sun. She had not left with the others on the Long March. For reasons I never knew she had been told to remain in the city. Perhaps she was a spy. She was taken from her bed one cold morning in early spring, before dawn, and she was forced to walk, just as she was, in her night clothes, to the Drum Tower, and there, with her back to the wall, and her eyes not blindfold, she was shot."

"Baba—how did you know?"

"She had a servant, an old woman. That woman came to me——" His voice faded to silence. His whole frame seemed to shrink. His eyelids dropped over his staring eyes.

"Come, Baba," I said. "You are too weary." And I led him to his room and stayed near until he was in bed and at last asleep.

I wish I had asked Baba if Gerald was ever told the manner of his mother's death. I think he was. The Chinese tell each other everything. Who can keep a secret there? Someone would have told. Gerald knows.

YESTERDAY the answer came to the question I did not ask. The postman brought a magazine under Chinese stamps. There are three of them on the magazine. I had not seen these new Communist stamps before. Each carries the face of a young man. One is a soldier, one is a machinist, one is a peasant. There is no name on the wrapper. It merely says P.O.B. No. 305, Peking, China. But I know Gerald sent it. For when I opened the magazine, I found it was dedicated to a martyr of the revolution. She was shot in Nanking on May the fifteenth, 1930. Her name was Han Ai-lan. She was Gerald's mother.

There is a picture of her on the cover. The face is calm and austere, a narrow face, the eyes large and lustrous, the hair drawn back from the high forehead, the lips, tenderly cut in youth, perhaps, are stern. I can see Gerald's face emerging from this face. The lines are the same.

So Gerald knows. I do not doubt now that the old servant woman bore a message to him from his mother. The mother would have told the son how she died and for what cause.

He did know, he did remember. For it was he who set our wedding day, May the fifteenth. He did not tell me why, but I know now. He cannot write me a letter, but he has sent me his mother's picture and the story of her life as a revolutionist. He wants me to understand.

Oh, beloved, I try, I try.



It grows no easier to live alone, woman without man. I feel a certain hardness in me. I am not as tender-hearted as I was. The daily exercise of love is gone and I fear an atrophy. I wonder how other women live, who have had husbands and have them no more.

But Gerald still lives. He is not dead, but liveth. I do not read the Scriptures regularly, but now I crave spiritual food. This morning, a summer's day in early June, full of life and burgeoning, the garden forcing itself, the late apple trees in full blossom, the grass new green, I felt my blood running through me, too swift and strong, and my soul cried out for succour. Then I took the small worn leather-bound New Testament which had been my father's, and it opened to these words, "He is not dead, but liveth." It is enough. I closed the book and went to my work.

Oh, good hard work that a farm has ever ready—I bless it. I went to the barn and there discovered that my prize cow, Cecily, had in the night presented me with a fine heifer calf. Mother and child were doing well, and Cecily looked at me smugly through the bars of the maternity stall. She is a pink-nosed Guernsey and she is slightly dish-faced, which lends her a saucy air. Her figure is impeccable, by Guernsey standards. She did not rise when she saw me, excusing herself doubtless by her

achievement. The calf is exquisite, with a dainty head and good lines of back and rump. She stared at me with faint alarm, and her mother licked her cheek for reassurance. Cecily was complacent. I offered her the mash that Matt concocts for such occasions and she ate it without greed, delicately and as a favour to me.

I came away cheered. Life flows on, whatever the need of the heart. I turned to the garden and attacked the young weeds, though of all tasks I hate weeding. The seeds are up, however, and the race is on. I worked hard all day, stopping only to get luncheon for Baba and me at noon. Rennie is in the last lap of his school year. He goes to college in the autumn and I fear my loneliness but I must not feed upon him. Baba and I will live here together like two old folk. . . .

Ah, but I am not old. Tonight when the young moon rose, I could not go to bed. Rennie is away this evening. He is in love, I think. He put on his best dark-blue suit, a white shirt and a crimson tie. He had even polished his Sunday shoes. I do not know who she is. I must wait.

Baba went to bed early. He likes to be under cover, as he puts it, by half past eight. But it is only the beginning of the night then, and I came to the narrow terrace that faces the moon, and lay down on the long chair. The air is chill, though it is June, and I wrapped myself in my white shawl and let myself dream of the beloved.

My mind floats over land and sea to the city which is his, and like a ghost I creep through the streets, and in the gate where he lives. This I have done again and again in the five years we have been parted. There is nothing eternal about our separation. At any moment he may decide to come here to me. If he does, I will not ask a question, I will not ask why did you, or how could you? I will open my arms and receive him. It is enough that he returns.

There hangs the moon! Upon a summer night in Peking we sit in the east courtyard. Our house belonged once to a Manchu prince, a lowly one, a younger brother. It is not large enough for a palace, but those who lived in it loved it well enough to add beauty here and there. The gates between the courts are moon-shaped, framed in tiles set in lace-like patterns. A lotus pool lies in the east court, and a cluster of bamboos hides the wall. The street is on the other side of the house, and the court is quiet. Moreover, the east court leads into our bedroom, Gerald's and mine. The huge Chinese bed stands against the inner wall.

At first, as a bride, I complained about the bed. It is too hard, I said, a wooden frame and a bottom of woven rattan to sleep upon. Gerald laughed at me and said that I wanted the beauty and not the hardness of Chinese life. And I said why should we sleep on wood and rattan when we could have a spring mattress, and is that a sin? Not sin, he said, but inconsistency. We should be one thing or the other. Why not have the best of both, I said, and so when he went to Tientsin to order supplies for the college year, he brought back an American spring mattress. And it was a game between us that I should pretend to force him to admit its comfort while he pretended to like the old hard Chinese bed bottom. We laughed a great deal in those days. I do not remember that he laughed with anyone else. He was to that degree not like his Chinese friends, for Chinese laugh easily and gaily. But Gerald is grave. He can be sombre and at such times he is silent. Nothing I could say would make him speak. Only love could bring him back to me, warm physical love, informed by heart and mind. Sitting there alone on the terrace, I stretched out my arms to him across the sea.

Rennie came home at midnight and found me still on the terrace. "You haven't been waiting for me, I hope, Mom?" he said.

Yes, he is getting to be an American. The stately name of Mother, upon which his father always insisted, has become Mom.

"No," I said. "I was just thinking about your father and wondering what he is doing tonight—working, probably."

Rennie did not answer. Instead, rather ostentatiously, he lit a cigarette. I know that he smokes, and he knows that I know, but it is the first time he has done so before me. "Give me one, will you?" I said.

He looked surprised and held out the packet. "I didn't know you smoked," he said and lit my cigarette.

"I don't," I retorted. "But you seem to enjoy it, and why not I?"

He was embarrassed and I fear the pleasure went out of his cigarette. Perhaps it is necessary for the young to have something to defy. I suspect they hate this modern permissiveness. There is nothing in it to set their teeth against. At any rate, Rennie soon put out his cigarette. He stretched himself in the other long chair and locked his hands behind his head. I heard him sigh.

"How old were you when you were married, Mom?"

"I was twenty-three."

"Gee, that was old."

"It didn't seem so," I said. "Your father and I were engaged for a year."

"Why didn't you get married before?"

How much does one reveal to a child? Rennie's profile in the moonlight was not a child's. He has grown three and a half inches this year. He is already as tall as Gerald. The bones of his face are hardening and the lines are strengthening. If these are outward signs of manhood, there must be inward changes, too.

"Your father was afraid I might not like China. More than that, he wanted to be sure that I could love what was Chinese in him. Until he was sure, he would not marry me."

Our son pondered this. "What is Chinese in him?" he asked at last. "I can't even remember him clearly."

"Why, Rennie, you were twelve when we left."

"I know—I should remember. I don't know why I can't."

He does not want to remember his father—that is why. But I must not accuse him. Let me seize this opportunity to help him remember.

"You know how he looks."

"He really looks Chinese," Rennie said unwillingly.

"Yes, he looks Chinese until he is with Chinese and then he looks American."

"If he were here he'd look Chinese all right."

"What of it? The Chinese are very handsome, especially those in the North, where your grandparents lived."

"Is my father more Chinese inside or more American?" Rennie asked.

"I think that when he is Chinese he is very Chinese. There are other times when he is very American."

"For example?"

Rennie has the precise mind of a scientist. How can I answer him? For it was when we were alone, husband and wife, that Gerald was American. That surely was his true self.

"He is very Chinese when it comes to family," I said. "He treats you as a Chinese father does his son, with an inexorable loving firmness. He never lets you forget that you are not only his son but you are the

grandson, the great-grandson, a thousand times over, of many men before you."

"But I have other ancestors—yours, Mom—and maybe I'm more like them."

"It may be that you are."

I knew that he had not reached the real meaning of all this talk. What can one do with the young except wait? Soon he began again.

"Mom, do you think my being part Chinese will keep an American girl from liking me?"

"Certainly not," I said. "It would be much more likely that a Chinese girl wouldn't like the American in you."

"I couldn't fall for a Chinese girl."

"You might. They're very beautiful, many of them."

"I shan't go back to China," he told me.

"You might go back some day to see your father, if he doesn't come here to us."

"Will he come here, do you think?"

This, this was the moment to tell him about the letter locked in my desk. I am afraid to tell him. He is too young to understand, too ignorant to have mercy.

"I hope he will come. Let's both hope. And who's the girl, Rennie?"

For of course there is a girl. All the talk has simply been leading up to it.

He sat up surprised. "Mom, how did you know?"

"Oh, I know," I said, trying to laugh. "I really know more than you think I do."

He lay back to stare again at the moon.

"She's the girl in that white house down the road. Summer people."

I knew people had moved into the house, but I have been too busy to call on them. Now of course I must go.

"What's her name?"

"Allegra Woods."

"What does the father do?"

"Business of some sort in New Jersey."

"How did you happen to meet?"

"She was walking down the road one day, towards Moore's Falls, and I came along and she asked where she was."

"You must bring her to see me," I said. All the warnings were quivering inside me. My son is in danger. The hour I had foreseen since the day he was laid in my arms, newborn, has now come. A girl has looked at him. He has looked at the girl. What girl is this?

"It's getting cold," I said. "We must go inside."

I HOPE the friendship will not move too quickly into something else. Rennie brought Allegra here today. They have been meeting every day, I think.

"Mother," he said, now very formal, "this is Allegra Woods."

I was doing the mending in the living-room and the lamp was lit, and Baba was sitting in peaceful silence in the brown leather arm-chair, his feet, in velvet Chinese shoes, on the hassock. He was wearing his crimson silk Chinese gown. I had helped him wash his hair and his beard today and they were snow-white.

"How do you do, Allegra," I said. I took my spectacles off by habit, since it is not good Chinese manners to greet a stranger, or a friend, in spectacles.

The young girl made a graceful movement towards me, not quite a bow, nor yet a curtsy. Then she put out a slim hand.

"How do you do, Mrs. MacLeod."

"This is Rennie's grandfather," I said, looking towards Baba.

For some reason Baba decided to be difficult. He said in Chinese, very clearly, "Who is this female?"

Rennie flushed. He pretends he has forgotten all his Chinese but when he wishes he remembers it perfectly. He spoke in sharp English. "Grandfather, this is my friend Allegra Woods."

Baba nodded his head like an old mandarin.

"She should be at home with her parents," he said in Chinese.

I laughed. "Allegra, you mustn't mind him. He lived in China for so many years he has forgotten he is an American."

Her blue eyes grew wide. "In China? Rennie didn't tell me."

Then Rennie has not told her everything. I must be careful not to tell too much.

"Yes," I said cheerfully. "We all lived there. Rennie's father is still there. As a matter of fact, Rennie was born in Peking."

"Really? But I thought China was Communist?"

"Just now, yes."

"Then how can his father——"

"He is the president of a great college and he feels it his duty to stay with his students."

"I see."

But she didn't see, that I knew. She looked thoughtfully at Rennie, her eyes big and blue.

"Get some ice-cream, Rennie," I said. "There's plenty in the freezer."

"Come along, Allegra." He seized her hand.

"Did you have to tell her everything at once?" Rennie groaned that night when he came home.

"I did not tell her everything," I said.

"She said now she knew why I seemed queer." Rennie choked.

I longed to put my arms about him but he would have hated it. Better to speak the truth.

"You will have to accept yourself," I said. "You are partly Chinese, one fourth by blood. You will never be happy until you are proud of all that you are—not just of a part."

I kissed his cheek and went away. The Allegras of this world are not for him, but he will have to find it out for himself. Then when the pain is over he will discover a woman who is his, and whose he can be.

What, I wonder, made me know Gerald was mine? I remember that spring day in my senior year at Radcliffe. I was hurrying to my class in philosophy, my arm full of books. I was late for class and much distracted by the beauty of the season when I saw Gerald run with his striking grace down the steps of the hall I was about to enter. I shall remember for ever the glint of the sun on his black hair, the lively glance of his black eyes, and the clear smoothness of his cream skin.

We did not speak that day on the steps, but we looked full into one another's eyes, and I made up my mind for ever. I would learn what his name was and tell him he was mine.

It did not happen in a day or a week but it did in a month. For I kept looking at him because he was handsome, the most beautiful man I had

ever seen. Soon I was speaking to him, managing to walk out of the door of a classroom when he did. And he was shy but he could not shake me off. And then I asked him one day to meet my mother. I was in love.

He let me know at last—oh what a long time it was before he let me know, three months, four months—I thought he would never tell me.

"I don't know whether you can consider me as a friend——" He wet his dry lips.

"I can and I do," I said, laughing with joy.

After we were married, I asked him why he stammered so much that day. He said, stammering again, though by then we were in our bedroom by the east court of the Peking house, "The—the fact is, I never thought I'd be—be in love, you know—with an American girl."

"Didn't you, now," I teased. "And whom would you be marrying please, if not me?"

He said soberly, "I always supposed I would marry a Chinese. It was my mother's wish."

That is what he said, long ago. Now, I keep looking at the picture of Gerald's mother. It is not cold. Behind the steadfast eyes of a Chinese woman I feel a powerful warmth. We might have been friends, she and I, unless she had decided first that I was her enemy. She would have decided, not I.

I was never deceived by Chinese women, not even by the flowerlike lovely girls. They are the strongest women in the world. Seeming always to yield, they never yield. Theirs is the strength that centuries have given them, the strength of the unwanted. It was always the sons who were welcomed at birth, who were given privilege and pampering love. And the daughters, accepting this, generation after generation, had to learn to think first of themselves.

I have put the picture back into the drawer and locked it fast. But it haunts me. Today, which is Saturday, Baba and I being at lunch together alone, since Rennie is off fishing, I could not refrain from speaking again of her.

"Baba, you remember we were speaking of Gerald's mother? I want to talk more about her."

He was eating neatly with chopsticks, a habit which he assumes whenever I cook rice.

He put them down. "What is it you wish to know?"

"I have a picture of her upstairs."

He turned quite pale. "How is it you have it?"

"It is in a magazine."

I could not tell him Gerald had sent it.

"Fetch it," he said.

I ran upstairs and brought it down and placed it before him. He put on his spectacles and looked at it carefully.

"Ye-es," he said slowly, "ye-es, I can recognize her. But it is not as she used to look."

"How did she look?"

"When I lifted her wedding veil, I thought her nearly beautiful."

"Yes, Baba?" This was because he paused so long.

"Afterwards I was not sure. She could make her face quite strange to me."

"Why did she?"

"I did not ask. We were never close enough for questions."

He took up his chopstick again and began to eat. I wonder if that Chinese woman did love him long ago, and because he did not love her, she took what she had, the child, and made the child her own. Who can tell me now?

TONIGHT the moon is full upon the mountains and the shadows in the valley are black. The gravelled road is silvered and I see two figures walking slowly at the far end into the trees, their arms entwined. I know they are Rennie and Allegra. They have walked out of the moonlight now into the shadows beneath the maple trees.

A change began with the new moon this month. Rennie was silent and hurried, not by work but because of haste and urgency in himself. He came and went without speaking and if he saw me looking at him he turned his head away.

Last night I stayed until long past midnight upon the terrace, so late that the wind was cool, and I wrapped my red wool scarf about me. Then I saw Rennie springing up the hill. He looked like a man in the night, so tall and strong and powerful. He saw me and he did not come to the terrace, but went instead to the door of the kitchen. I could bear it no longer.

"Rennie!"

He paused, his hand on the latch.

"Yes?"

"Come here, please."

He came quietly and calmly.

"You're up late," he said.

"I have waited for you."

His voice is a man's voice now. "You mustn't wait for me—not any more."

"I cannot sleep when I do not know where you are," I said.

"You will have to learn to sleep, not knowing."

I was suddenly angry because I knew he was right. And I could not keep from speaking the truth.

"I know you are with Allegra every evening and I don't like her."

It is the first time I have spoken my growing dislike for this girl whom Rennie is beginning to love. If Gerald were here, I could talk with him and heed his advice.

"Sit down, Rennie," I said. "It is late, but not too late for what I want to say."

He sat down on the low wall of the terrace, his back to the moon so that his face was in shadow and mine in the light. And I went on:

"It is not that I disapprove of Allegra for her own sake. She is like many other girls, pretty and sweet and shallow. She will make some man quite happy, a man who does not need much. He will be happy with Allegra and she with him for the heart of each has the measure of a cup and no more, and so they fulfil one another. But you, Rennie, need a fountain of love, living and eternal. You must find a deep woman, my son, a woman with an overflowing heart. When you find her, believe me, I shall never lie awake again, however late you come home."

"Allegra says you are jealous," Rennie retorted.

"That is because she knows she is not the one you should love, and she knows that I know it, too."

We were on the edge of a great bitterness, my son and I, and I drew back from the abyss.

I tried to speak calmly.

"I suppose the reason I long so much for you to love one who can truly love you is because your father and I have been utterly happy

together. I have never loved another man, nor had he loved another woman before me. It is old-fashioned, I know. It is quite the thing now, I hear, to say that one must experiment in love. Perhaps that is true for the shallow-hearted. But it is not true for the deep in heart. Your father and I are among those few. It made our love complete when we knew that what we gave each to the other was new and never given before. I assure you it did."

How glad I am that I have never shown Rennie the letter I have locked in my desk upstairs! For whatever the letter means I know that Gerald still loves only me. But Rennie could not know and he will never know if he does not find his mate.

"It's strange then that my father does not even write to you," he said cruelly.

"Not strange," I replied. "There is some reason why he cannot write, a reason that has nothing to do with you and me. There are many such reasons that separate people now. We must not allow them to destroy love. We must wait, still loving."

I was teaching myself as well as Rennie.

Rennie got up and kissed my cheek.

"You needn't worry, Mom," he said. "And you're mistaken about Allegra. She's all right. Anyway, I'm not my father and she is not you, and we have to live our own lives."

To this there could be no reply.

"Good night, Mom."

"Good night, my son," I said.

I heard him clatter up the back stairs from the kitchen to his room. This summer he moved from the room next to mine, where he has lived since we came home, announcing that he would take the room over the kitchen. I know, of course, that he wants that room so that he can come and go without passing my door. He has the right to come and go without telling me. And if Allegra were the girl I dream of for him, I would not care. Yet no mother can save her son. She can only watch and wait and wring her hands. I am sure he did not understand when I spoke of deep-hearted love. I am sorry for Allegra, too, for if this goes on he will make demands on her far beyond what she is able to give. His passion will mightily exceed hers, and she will be made miserable because she knows she is not enough for him. It is Allegra I

pity and I see that she must be protected from Rennie. I must save Rennie, but I must save Allegra, too.

•

TODAY Rennie is full of joy. He thinks he has clarified his relationship to me. He is free, he thinks, and he came downstairs this morning all life and cheer, his beautiful face aglow, his eyes shining with love. He kissed me briskly on the cheek, and sat down at the table to eat breakfast.

"I must begin cleaning the brush from the high sugar-bush," he said, his voice loud and clear. "Matt can help me when he has done the barn."

"I suppose so," I said.

He was off then, very busy—and I washed the dishes and tended the house. Rennie thinks I should have a dishwasher but I will not. I like the quiet reflective moments after a meal, my hands in the hot soapy water and the view from the kitchen window before my eyes. Then, too, I love my dishes. Some I brought with me from the house in Peking, and the rest are my mother's and ones that I used as a child. I do not understand women who complain about their houses and their children and their husbands. This is our dear daily work. And I do not like new things. It takes time to become acquainted with possessions, and they should not change. Whenever a dish is lost or broken, something of life goes with it.

This morning I used for porringers the blue Chinese bowls lined with yellow porcelain. Alas, when I washed mine, it slipped from my fingers and fell against the sink and broke to pieces. I could not keep the tears from rushing to my eyes. I carried the bits of lovely pottery outside and buried them under the old apple tree by the front door.

When I came back into the kitchen Baba was there, waiting to be fed. He is growing very old now, and childish. I tucked the napkin in his collar but he would not lift his hand to his spoon, and I fed him. He ate then quite patiently, in silence, his eyes fixed vaguely on the window.

"I go back to my bed," he said when the dish was empty.

"Sit on the terrace a while in the sun," I suggested.

He shook his head and I had to coax him. "Do you not remember how the grandfathers in Peking always sit against the walls of the houses where the sun shines? They do not get out of bed and eat and go back

to bed again. They like the sun, and the air is warm today and without wind."

He rose obediently and I wrapped a scarf about his neck and led him to the terrace and sat him down on the bench against the wall. He sat there, his eyes closed as though he slept, and I forgot him. At noon, ashamed, I hurried out to find him panting somewhat with the heat, his cheeks flushed and his dark eyes open in reproach.

"Shall I go to bed now?" he inquired.

"Indeed you shall," I said, "after you have had some tea and a boiled egg with your rice."

He ate without demur, relishing the Chinese tea, and I took him up to bed, and pulled the shades and left him fast asleep. The sun and air did him good, but how could I forget him? How selfish to let my mind dwell only upon my son!

Yet the hours of thought while I tended my house have cleared my mind. There is no better time for a woman to think than in the hours when she sweeps and dusts and makes beds. The physical activity sends blood coursing through her frame and the brain awakes. Yes, I shall go to see Allegra's mother.

MRS. WOODS was sitting on the porch of her house when I opened the gate. The house is a pleasant one, white-painted and the shutters green, a conventional house even to the flower beds and the path between them. She was working at needle-point.

She rose when I came to the steps. She is a plump, middle-aged woman, a round friendly face, the sort of woman to be seen on any porch anywhere, a good woman, somewhat timid.

"Come in," Mrs. Woods said, seeming flustered.

"I am Mrs. Gerald MacLeod," I said, "and I live up the road."

"I know your boy Rennie," she said. "We'd best sit inside, because the mites are bad today. I was just about to move."

We went inside a narrow hall with a red carpet, the straight stairs leading to the second floor. To the right was a dining-room and to the left a largish living-room. It was pleasant and comfortable. There were a few magazines on the table beside the couch but no books. How could Rennie live in a house without books?



"Take that chair," Mrs. Woods said. "It's my husband's, and so it's the most comfortable."

There was suddenly a mild twinkle in her grey eyes that I liked. I sat down and came to the point at once.

"I'm sure you know that Rennie and Allegra are seeing each other. I want to know what you think about it. They're so young"

Her round face grew concerned. It is a sweet childish face. Allegra is much prettier. The father, perhaps, has straightened the lines of her face. But she has her mother's curved figure.

"They are young," she agreed. "Mr. Woods and I have been worried. Of course we want Allegra to feel free. But she's only a senior at high school next year. We wouldn't want her to think she shouldn't finish high school."

"Heavens, no," I said. "And Rennie will have to go to college—and after that he will have still more years somewhere, perhaps in Europe, or perhaps in China, where his father is."

Real horror broke over my neighbour's face. "China? Nobody can go there, can they?"

"Not now," I said, "but Rennie may join his father there some day, when the world is better."

"Is his father—a Chinese?" Mrs. Woods spoke the word apologetically.

"No," I said, "at least, not altogether. His father, Rennie's grandfather, is American. He lives with us. My husband is president of a great university in China. He feels it his duty to stay by his work."

"Isn't China Communist?" Her voice was vaguely reproachful.

"Yes," I said, "and my husband is not Communist, I can assure you. But he still feels he must stay." Then the truth forced itself from me. "You see, his mother was Chinese."

"She was?" Mrs. Woods's voice was an exclamation. "Then that's why Rennie—we thought maybe he had Indian blood."

"Didn't Rennie tell Allegra?"

"No, no, I'm sure he didn't."

"Then I am glad I told. It is better for you to know before they fall too much in love."

"I should say so."

Her face was flushed with thought, her plump hands clenched together on her lap. Suddenly she looked up and her eyes met mine.

"You poor thing," she said, "it's dreadful for you, isn't it?"

"What—Rennie?"

"The whole business—marrying somebody way off—a Chinese!"

"My husband is American," I said. "His father registered his birth at the American Embassy in Peking. Rennie was registered there, too."

"Still and all—it's different, somehow."

"I've been completely happy," I said. "So happy that I must make sure Rennie will be happy, too. I couldn't let him marry a girl who merely tolerated his being partly Chinese. She must be proud of it. She must understand that he is the richer for it, as a man and—yes, even as an American."

She could not follow me, though she tried, bless her, and I could not keep from liking her more and more. She is simple and honest. I hope she will continue as my friend, so that we can talk as woman to woman. I miss a good friend. Matt's wife is good, but she is ignorant and besides she and Matt quarrel constantly. They live alone on the mountainside opposite ours, their children gone now. Matt groans sometimes on a grey morning, "Oh, that woman has been the death of me these forty years!" And when I take a lettuce to Mrs. Matt she tells me of Matt's wickedness and how he won't shave but once a week, and she declares that he's been torture these forty years. But Mrs. Woods is a happy wife and mother. I can see that.

Mr. Woods came in then, a thin, bald man, his eyes very blue. This is his holiday, he told me. He works in an accountant's office in Passaic, New Jersey.

"I am your neighbour, Mr. Woods, and frankly I came to see you and Mrs. Woods about my son and your daughter," I said.

"Mrs. MacLeod tells me her husband is Chinese," Mrs. Woods said significantly.

"No, no," I cried. "I said that he is American, although his mother was Chinese. She was a lady of high birth. She is dead now."

"No kidding," Mr. Woods exclaimed in a low voice. "Well, now! I don't know as I ever knew of anyone mixed like that."

It was obvious that he was shocked, and at the same time he did not want to hurt me. He was sorry for me, and couldn't put it into words.

I got up. "Thank you both," I said as cheerfully as I could. "Please don't worry. Rennie will be going off to college soon, and young people

forget easily. Allegra is so pretty that she must have a lot of boy friends."

They grasped at the suggestion. "She is very popular," Mrs. Woods said proudly.

Allegra came in at this moment. Her cheeks were rose pink. She had on a white sleeveless frock, short and tight, and only a young pretty girl could have suffered its severity.

"Hello, Mrs. MacLeod," she said with a quick smile.

"I'm afraid Rennie kept you up too late, last night," I said. "I scolded him for it."

"Oh, I can always sleep," Allegra said. She sat on the couch beside her father and he put his arm round her shoulders and squeezed her against him.

"How's my honey?"

"Just fine," Allegra said and leaned her fair head against his shoulder.

Mrs. Woods watched them tenderly. "They're such chums," she murmured. It was touching to see how the parents adored this child, their only one.

They were anxious for me to be gone. They would not talk to the child before me. I got up and bade them good-bye as if nothing had happened, as though we had not rearranged two lives. We lingered on the porch, we admired the sweet williams along the path. And so I went home.

When Rennie came in to supper I had no chance to tell him what I had done. He ate in a hurry and in his work clothes, and then rushed to his room to bathe and change. In a few minutes he raced through the kitchen in clean blue jeans and a fresh shirt.

"Good night, Mom," he called as he went.

"Good night, son," I said.

When I had washed the dishes and had settled Baba for the night, I went to my room. Tonight I could sleep. Whatever I had to meet, I would face it in the morning.

I WOKE early and got up immediately, knowing what awaited me. When I came downstairs Rennie was there at the kitchen table. He had made a pot of coffee and was drinking it, black and strong.

"You haven't been to bed," I said.

He blazed at me. "How could I sleep? She has gone."

I sat down and poured myself a cup of coffee. "Go on. Say whatever you want to say. Let's have it out."

My son was terrible to see. His face was pale and his eyes were burning black. His lips were parched and bitten.

"You went to her parents. You told them."

"Nothing but the truth," I said quietly.

"You wouldn't wait until they knew me!"

Oh, what bitterness in his voice!

"It is better for them to know the truth first," I said. "If she loves you enough to defy her parents, I will say nothing—I swear I will not."

"At least you might have warned me," he cried.

I would not yield to him. "I had to see how they felt, and see it with my own eyes. What they feel cannot be overcome unless your love and hers are equal. I know—I know!"

"She does love me," he muttered. "She told me so."

"She loves you all she can, but it is not enough. It will never be enough, because she is small—small, I tell you! I do not blame her. She cannot help what she is born. But you are born big—as big as the world."

"Damn you," he whispered.

I looked at him. "Now I am glad your father is not here."

We stared at each other. I kept looking at my son's face and his gaze broke, he so young, so proud in such grief.

"Why did you ever give me birth?" he muttered, and then he sobbed once and leaped from the room.

THE HOUSE is too still. I knew when I opened my eyes this morning that Rennie was gone. It was a grey morning, a soft rain drifting over the trees and misting into my open window. The curtains hung limp. It was well past dawn and time for milking. By now I should hear Rennie stirring. I got up and closed the window and stood looking down the valley half hidden by rain, summoning my courage to go to his room. I tried to think of Gerald but my heart did not call and his did not answer. I could not see his face and when I forced the eyes of my mind

towards him, I saw only the stretching miles of land and the terrible grey sea between us.

I opened the door of Rennie's room and looked in. The bed was empty, neatly made. All the room was neat and I was frightened by such order. On any other morning his clothes would have been piled on the arm-chair, his shoes scattered, his books open on the table. I ran across the room to his wardrobe lest it be empty. Oh, what joy to see his clothes still hanging there! I counted his suits, the brown second best, his work clothes, the jackets and slacks. No, his best dark-blue suit was gone.

Then I saw the envelope on his desk, addressed to me.

I sat down to read it because I was too weak to stand. "Dear Mother," Rennie said. *Mother*. Not Mom. "I have gone to find Allegra. I have to see for myself why she has changed—if she has. Don't get in touch with me—don't telephone, don't write. See you when I get home. Rennie."

Now there is nothing to do but wait. Blessings on old Baba, who is all I have left!

I went back to my room and bathed and dressed and descended to the kitchen.

And then I was disturbed by plaintive sounds and I heard Baba's voice. I went upstairs. He lay in his bed, the bed-clothes drawn tight about his neck, his dark eyes bewildered.

"I can't get up," he murmured.

"Are you in pain, Baba?" I asked.

"No pain," he said indistinctly.

"Lie still," I said. "I will send for the doctor."

So I went to the telephone. It was early and Bruce Spaulden had not left home.

"Yes?" His voice was crisp.

"Bruce, I think Baba has had another stroke."

"I'll be over. Just keep him covered and quiet."

I went back to Baba and told him that Bruce was coming and then I made the room tidy. Baba lay there, quiet and good, and watched me, and I saw his face beginning to draw towards the left.

Now I heard Bruce's footsteps in the hall downstairs and he came upstairs and into the room.

"Good morning, Elizabeth," he said.

It was the first time he had called me by my name and I was startled.

"Good morning," I said. "Here is my poor Baba, waiting."

Baba turned piteous eyes towards the doctor.

Bruce sat down by the bed and made his examination. There is something wonderful in the way a good doctor examines his patient, his mind concentrated, his hands sure in exploration. I stood respectful, admiring Bruce. He is lean, as most Vermonters are, tall and serious. His hair is an ordinary brown and straight, his nose is straight and his mouth firm. When he smiles his face changes altogether. It is mischievous and almost gay. He is even-tempered, inclined to silence and meditation. I have absorbed a Chinese curiosity into my being and I wanted to ask him why he was not married. To a Chinese anything can be asked between friends.

He covered Baba carefully.

"Not too serious," he said. "There will be more of these little strokes. He'll sleep a lot. Let him sleep."

Indeed Baba was already sleeping, breathing softly aloud. We left him and went downstairs into the living-room.

"Have you had breakfast?" I asked.

"No," Bruce said.

"Let us breakfast together. I'm lonely because Rennie has gone——"

"Gone?"

"For only a few days, I hope, but I don't know."

And I told him about Allegra. Bruce smiled rather grimly. "He'll be back. We always come back to our mothers."

I was busy getting the breakfast on the table, eggs, coffee, toast and fruit. When we were seated I asked my question.

"Because I am so happily married, Bruce, I ask why you have never married."

"Too busy," he said, buttering toast.

"It's not my business—but——"

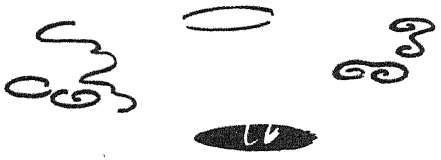
"Go on," he said. "I lead a simple life. No secrets."

"Are you happy as you are?"

"I don't know. I suppose so. I haven't asked myself."

I poured his second cup of coffee. What he did not wish to tell he would not tell. That is a Vermonter, too.

When he was gone, suddenly and to my own surprise I gave myself over to weeping for Gerald. I knew that the doors of the house in Peking were shut against me.



LAST WEEK, coming home from my Saturday shopping, I was charmed by the sight of a black mother ewe and her twin white lambs, cropping grass in a roadside pasture, and I stopped the car and got out to watch the mother and her children. The sunlight was bright, mild, Vermont sunshine, never hot as the Chinese sun was hot. I sat down on a round grey rock. At this the mother ewe was gently alarmed and bleated softly. Immediately the baby lambs came to her side and stood trembling on their slender legs, and peered at me. I thought that I would like to own the ewe and her lambs. They can crop the short grass on the hillside about my house and keep the semblance of a lawn.

I went to find the farmer who owns the ewe and after some search I found one of the wry individuals who cling to this soil, a man who farms a little and tinkers at whatever job comes his way. He was mending a table when I came from behind his small frame house. "Well?" he inquired without good morning.

"I'd like to know if your black ewe and white lambs are for sale."

"Might be," he said.

"How much will you take for them?" I asked.

"Don't know as I want to sell," he said, and measured his ruler against a strip of wood. "I'll think it over."

"Do," I said. "I'll be at home this afternoon."

He came this morning, two days later, leading the ewe and the lambs

on a rope. "Ten dollars in cash and the rest in maple syrup." he said.

We argued for half an hour or so over the quantity of syrup but I yielded, since, being a Vermonter, he would not, and now the ewe and the lambs are cropping the grass on my hillside. She, with the lambs, provides me with a comfort I cannot fathom. It is a small comfort, but deep, another tie to this earth. I own something more, something alive.

SOMETIMES, wandering the Chinese roads outside our city, Gerald and I came upon a peasant standing in quiet reverence before a small wayside shrine. Inside the shrine two gods sat, male and female, a married pair, for so the peasants conceive their gods to be. They cannot imagine a solitary god. That, they believe, would be against the law of life. So before the divine pair the peasant stood to light a stick of incense. It was a sight simple and good. I said to Gerald, "Would that we could pray in this fashion and believe!"

"It is not that we cannot believe," he replied. "It is that we do not want anything enough. Faith rises from necessity. We have no necessity."

Out of my necessity now, I find that I must pray. Out of my intense anxiety for my son I have gone each night to his room and standing in the empty silence I pray for him. How far the prayer rises I cannot guess. Whether there is a listening ear I do not know. But at least the prayer crowding my heart to agony is released and I am relieved. Some of the burden is lifted.

RENNIE has come home. He came last night, late. I was asleep but I wake at the slightest sound. I heard a door open, the kitchen door. No one except Rennie has a key. The next sound would be the refrigerator, opened and shut. . . . Yes, that sound, too, I heard. I longed to spring from my bed and run downstairs and enfold him. But I had grown cautious. It was no longer what I wished to give but what he would accept. He had learned to live without me and without his home. I would not go downstairs. The days of childhood communion were over.

In my bed I lay, the faint moonlight streaming across the counterpane, and I listened. He ate at the kitchen table. I heard the clink of a dish and the scrape of a chair. He ate well, for it was a full half-hour before

I heard the door to the stair open, the little winding back stair that goes only to his room. I heard the sound of water running into the bath cautiously and at half cock, so as not to wake me. Oh, how thankful was I that he had come home! Thank God, thank God!

Then I heard the door handle turn softly. When I saw him standing in the doorway, wrapped in his old red wool dressing-gown, I spoke as easily as if he had never been away. "Is that you, Rennie?"

In such foolish words great moments are encompassed. He answered as easily. "How are you, Mother?"

"I am well. Did you just get back?"

"I had something to eat downstairs." He came towards the bed and sat down on the edge of it, and we gazed at each other in the moonlight.

"Shall I put on the light?" I asked.

"No," he said. "Did I wake you?"

"It doesn't matter," I said, pretending to be sleepy. "I don't get up as early as I used to. Matt milks the cows."

"Is everything all right?" he asked.

"I've bought a black ewe and twin white lambs so that I need not cut the grass."

"I saw them in the moonlight."

Then it seemed we had nothing more to say. I would not let a question escape from the prison of my heart.

"You haven't asked me where I have been, Mother."

"You might have written to me," I said.

"I couldn't," he said. "And it doesn't matter where I've been. . . . Mother, why did you let me be born? I asked you before."

"You didn't wait for my answer," I reminded him.

"I will wait now," he said.

"Your father and I love each other with all our hearts and when there is such love between two young and healthy human beings, one a man, the other a woman, a child is their hope."

"You might have thought what it would mean to me."

Oh, what a bitter cry this was!

"Your father thought of it. I said that our child would be so strong, so beautiful, so self-sufficient, that he would meet any situation and be the conqueror."

His eyes were as black as dead coals.

"When I was in China," he said, "they called me a foreigner. I did not care then, for I thought I had another country, America."

"People have been kind to you here," I said.

"It is not kindness I want—it is love."

"You have much love," I said. "Your father loves you and I love you. And love will come to you some day from a woman."

"Allegra is not allowed to love me. Her parents forbid it."

"Can she not be disobedient?" I inquired. "My mother forbade me to love your father, too, but I disobeyed. And I have never been sorry."

No, I am not sorry, though Gerald's last letter lies upstairs in my desk, a thing alive with sorrow.

"Not all women are strong," Rennie said and he looked at me with something like distaste. "And because a woman is not strong, it does not mean that her love is the less valuable."

"What is Allegra afraid of?" I tried to hide my scorn.

"She is afraid of what I carry in my veins, the ancestry."

"You mean the Chinese part of you," I said.

He nodded, and he knotted his hands together.

"The very part of you that I love most and am most proud of because I love your father, you wish you did not have. Shame on you, Rennie!"

"You don't understand," he cried. "You are American, your ancestry is pure——"

"Oh, pure," I cried, "the rebels of half a dozen nations in Europe——"

"You are all white," he said stubbornly.

It was not the moment for argument.

"I am going to Kansas," he went on. "I'll work on Sam's ranch this summer, and go to college in the autumn."

No "if you don't mind, Mother," no "unless you need my help here." But I am proud and I do not ask my son's help.

"When will you go?" I asked.

"I suppose I ought to stop long enough to see Baba," he replied.

Perhaps it is time for me to tell him of Baba's wife. Some of this rebel blood in him comes from her. She suffered, too, because she was not loved. Perhaps she can help him now as I cannot.

"Stay a day, at least, Rennie. There are things I want to say to you before you go—things I have never told you."

He looked at me quickly with those dark, dark eyes.

"All right," he said, "if that's the way you want it——"

WHEN Baba woke the next morning we went upstairs. There he was, lying upon his pillows exactly as he had gone to sleep, his white hair scarcely ruffled, his dark eyes vague and only half open. I spoke to him.

"Baba, good morning. See who has come to you."

He opened his eyes and stared at me. "Who is that? Is it Gerald?"

"No—no—no. It is Rennie."

He had forgotten his own grandson. "Should I know him?" he inquired.

"Yes, you should," I said. "He is Gerald's son—and mine."

"Gerald's son," he mused. "Had Gerald a son?"

I turned to implore. "Rennie, forgive him. He is so old. He has forgotten everything."

Oh, what a look of sadness was on the young face!

"It doesn't matter," Rennie said. "Nothing matters."

"Go to sleep again, Baba," I said. "I will come back soon." We tiptoed out again, and I knew that I had lost. Baba has withdrawn from us into the distances of old age.

I was frantic to reclaim my son. "Rennie, come into my room now. I have pictures to show you."

In my room he sat down as formally as a guest and waited. And I took out the picture of Gerald's mother.

"This is the Chinese lady Baba married," I told him. "This is your grandmother. She is quite beautiful, in her own dignified way. She is someone to be proud of, the daughter of an ancient family."

Rennie took the picture and gazed at the calm Chinese face. "Why did Baba marry her?"

"He wanted to become part of the country to which he had dedicated his life. He thought he could get near to the people he loved."

"Now he has forgotten everything," Rennie said. "He does not know even me. I suppose he never loved her."

Rennie gave me back the picture. He got to his feet and leaned down from his height and kissed my cheek.

"Good-bye, Mother," he said. He went away immediately. I heard his

old car whirl down the road in a cloud of summer dust. This time he may never come back. What I remember is that he spoke again as his father taught him, his English classic and pure. The slang, the American boy talk, he had wiped from tongue and lips.

I CANNOT follow Rennie even if I would, for here is Baba, who has no one but me. I am held on this quiet farm, remote from everyone except Matt and his wife, and they know only the language of a hate-filled love. They quarrel and enjoy themselves in combat by day and I do not doubt also by night. Seven children they have bred together. They have needed no other companionship, no other excitement, I do believe. Matt is insanely jealous and Mrs. Matt is proud of his jealousy, boasting of its oppression.

"If Matt so much as sees a man's hat in the house, he has hysterics," she boasts, and her little round wrinkled face glows with pleasure.

She said that this morning when I crossed the dusty road to praise her flower beds. Before I could reply, as I always do, that she is lucky Matt still cares enough about her to be jealous, the postman handed me a few letters at the gate, none of any importance except a thin grey envelope sent from Singapore. The handwriting was strange.

"Your husband?" the postman asked.

"No," I said. I left him and went to the rock beside the spring, and sat there in the shade of a leaning apple tree and tore open the envelope.

"Dear Elder Sister," the letter began.

It was from her.

All these months I have not answered Gerald's letter. He asked my permission and I have not given it. Underneath all that I do has been the knowledge of this delay, a secret as hidden as a sin.

She writes in English, but not well. She wants me to understand that she will not enter my house to take my place until I give permission.

> You have lived in Peking very long (she writes). I think you understand something very much about us Chinese people. Here now it is hard for living. It is also hard for MacLeod, your husband, and he is wishing so much for some woman to take care of house and mending and cooking, and so forth. At my former request, he wrote to you asking your

agreement to my coming to his house as wife-in-absence. You know this is quite common, no more second wife or concubine, as before, which is too old-fashioned, but wife-in-absence. Of course if you come back, I will go away if you wish. To you I have respect as younger to elder. Please permit me, and tell me how everything should be in caring for our husband. I wish to do what you tell me and make him so happy. This is my duty. But first your permission, please, to save his life. I send this letter to a secret friend in Singapore and please return to same.

Your humble younger sister,

MEI-LAN

The address in Singapore is to a silk shop. Someone there, I suppose, is her secret friend, someone in touch with this strange new China, by which I am rejected. Shall I give my permission for another woman to take my place? Surely no American woman has ever been in a similar predicament. I cannot answer this letter today. I do not know what to say, until I am in communion with Gerald again.

I take his letter from the locked drawer of my desk and though I have sworn that I will not look at it again, I do so. I set it down here. This is the letter from Peking, Gerald's last letter.

MY DEAR WIFE:

First, before I say what must be said, let me tell you that I love only you. Whatever I do now, remember that it is you I love. If you never receive a letter from me again, know that in my heart I write to you every day. I say this because of what I must next tell you. It is imperative for me to take into my home a Chinese woman. It is not only that I need someone to look after the house, to wash my clothes, mend and so on. You know how helpless I am in these matters. But it is necessary now for me to prove myself. It is not enough, it seems, for me to swear loyalty to those in present power. I must forswear my past, I must curse my non-Chinese blood. I have been ordered to choose another woman. I tell you because you and I have always been honest, one with the other. If I were to be less than honest with you now, it would mean that I had indeed forgotten our life together. I shall never forget.

I cannot write again. It would be too dangerous for me and for our son. You think him safe in your country, but he is not safe anywhere unless I repudiate him and you. Do not believe I have done so in reality. I wish to stay alive, if possible, until these days are past. If I meet death in spite of all my efforts to avoid it, remember that my only thought is of you, my Eve.

GERALD

I do not know why I have delayed all these months to do what I knew had to be done. Now that this letter has come from the woman, I see that I must give permission at once. Perhaps I shall cable. No, to receive a cable from America might make trouble for a Chinese even in Singapore. I will write and send the letter air mail. I am writing for Gerald. Yes, dear and beloved, I am writing this for you.

DEAR YOUNGER SISTER:

Your letter has come to my hand. I have read it. I give my permission. You may not take my place, for each woman has her own place in a man's life, but you may enter my house and make your own place there. It is true, as you say, that I understand. Nevertheless, my heart breaks. Care for him well, for I love him.

ELIZABETH

I stamped the envelope and took it to the post office and slipped it into the box under the window. I had done what I must and I went home. Baba was not yet out of bed, his day beginning at noon and ending at twilight. He seemed drowsy, vague. But when he was dressed and sitting in his arm-chair, when he had eaten his bowl of oatmeal and drunk a cup of tea, he suddenly seemed awake and knowing. Perhaps Rennie had left a dart of memory in him, by which he was pricked.

"Did someone come here yesterday?" he inquired.

"Yes, Baba. It was Rennie, your grandson."

He reflected upon this information. Half an hour later, while I was straightening his room, he spoke with sudden clarity.

"But I thought it was Ai-lan."

"How could it be, when she was a woman?"

"She looked like a man," he said. "She put on a uniform. It was of dark-blue cotton, the jacket buttoned, and trousers like a man. It startled me."

So Rennie looks like his Chinese grandmother! He looks like Gerald, certainly. Then Gerald looks like his mother.

"Ai-lan was killed," Baba said painfully. His old face wrinkled and tears dripped from his eyes. He wept for his dead wife. But why now, after all the years?

"Did you love her, Baba?" I asked.

"I couldn't love her," he said. "I tried, for the Scriptures say a man

must cleave to his wife. They do not say how it is to be done. And she knows I could not."

"You gave her a son," I reminded him for comfort.

"Ah, but she knew," he retorted. "She knew very well. On the morning he was born, a fine spring morning, I went into her room. She lay with the child sleeping on her arm. 'I have given you a son.' That was what she said. And I couldn't speak. The child had long black hair. It was a shock to think my son was Chinese. I wasn't prepared."

He shook his head in vague distress.

What he meant was that he had not thought of a child. He married Gerald's mother for reasons of his own. He did not want a son. And that not being wanted had remained deep in Gerald's being, a dagger never withdrawn, a wound never healed. It was the wound that kept Gerald from coming with me to my country. I feel it. But Rennie carries the mark and he is here.

Oh, how deep is the wound of not being loved! From generation to generation the new-born heart is wounded afresh and cannot be healed until love is found, in someone, somewhere.

Baba had begun to weep again and I asked, to divert him,

"Baba, do you remember Sam Blaine? You lived in his little house, in Kansas."

"Did I?"

"Yes. Rennie has gone there to work on the ranch. Sam Blaine was kind to you when you were taken ill on the train and they put you off. He became your friend. Now he is Rennie's friend."

He remembered none of it, but at least he forgot to weep. I pushed his chair to the window, and he gazed peacefully out upon the rising hills and the valleys. He likes to watch the sheep. I went away to do my day's work.

Tonight when Baba was in bed he suddenly remembered about Sam Blaine. I had said good night, when Baba spoke.

"Sam Blaine is forty-two years old. He has never married. His father owned two thousand acres of good black earth. He was a cattleman, and he owned mines in Nevada, too. Sam was his only child."

"Baba," I cried, "how well you remember!" So I sat down and Baba said he had been taken from the train, ill and feverish, and told to wait on the station until a doctor could be summoned. Sam Blaine, who had

come to the station to fetch some goods, took Baba home with him and put him to bed.

"I had typhoid fever," Baba said. "I was very ill."

And bit by bit he told me the story. When he woke in the night, not knowing where he was, Sam sat by the bed and talked about China. He had been there during the war. As Baba told me this, he was suddenly bewildered, and looked at me with troubled eyes. "Where is that land where we once lived?"

"It is across the sea. And Gerald is there."

He was puzzled. "Then why are we here?"

Why, indeed? My heart broke and I leaned my head on his bony old breast. "Now it is you who are weeping," he said and he lay patient and still, waiting for me to lift my head. There was no warmth in him, only a final patience, and my tears dried.

"It is time for you to sleep," I told him.

I drew the blanket about his shoulders and went away.

TONIGHT, when loneliness became intolerable, I went upstairs and took down the box of Gerald's letters and I laid them out upon my desk in order of time. There are only twelve, not including the final one. The first one was written soon after we left him in Shanghai. He was cheerful, believing that nothing could be worse than the years of war through which we had already passed. He was hopeful about the new government. We had no presentiments, in spite of old Mr. Pilowski, the White Russian who managed the hotel where we stayed.

"Not to be trusted," Mr. Pilowski declared, and brushed up his stiff moustaches. "Never are revolutionaries to be trusted—no, not in the world. So they came into my Russia, promising all and seizing everything. So did they in France before, killing the kings and the queens and themselves behaving worsely."

Gerald argued with him. "We can scarcely go on as we are, Mr. Pilowski. The people are wretched after the war. Inflation is crushing. Nothing is being done."

"Some day, you will know that nothing being done is better than wickedness being done," Mr. Pilowski declared. Gerald smiled, refusing further argument, still believing himself right. It is the arrogance of the

Chinese to believe that they are more reasonable, more sane, than all other peoples. In some way it is true.

"Everything goes well," he writes in his first letter. "I am beginning to think you should have stayed in China. Rennie could have taken his college work here in Peking. I believe that a new day is coming in this old, old country of mine."

Not "our" old, old country, but "mine." He was already choosing his country, alone, if need be.

The hopefulness continues through to the fifth letter. Then I see the first hint of doubt.

"My Eve," he writes, "perhaps it is better that you are away for a year or so. In order to succeed the new government must clear away all obstacles. Do you remember Liu Chin, the silk merchant? It seems he was a traitor. He was so mild, so gentle. Today he was shot at the Marco Polo Bridge with eleven others, two of them women. Some do not like the new order, but we must live with it and through it. The Minister of Education unfortunately is not a man of wide education. I am having to replace——" He scratches that out. It appears that already it is not safe to be frank. Thereafter Gerald writes no more of anything of importance. He tells me when the yellow Shantung rose in the east court blooms.

"Dear Eve, the rose is late this year. We have had dust storms, the most severe I have ever known. The goldfish are dying in the pool. The gardener went home to his parents in Shansi a month ago. I have had difficulty in finding another. People do not want to work——" The words are scratched out again. People do not want to work? Why not?

The eighth letter is very short. "Dear Wife: I am engaging the professors for next semester. The new dean is a clever young man with many ideas. The dean of women is a former student of mine. Tell Rennie to study engineering. It will be better for him than teaching. Tonight is hot and still. I face a long lonely summer."

The ninth letter is listless. The university year is over and he is tired. I know the mood. We used to take a journey, go perhaps to the sea at Peitaiho, or travel to the Diamond Mountains in Korea. One year we went to Tai Shan and lived in a Buddhist temple for a month. I wonder if Rennie remembers. The old abbot taught him how to play cat's cradle with a strip of silk.



Three months passed before the tenth letter reached me. I wept when I read it and it makes me weep now. For I see that my beloved has resigned himself to that which he does not understand. "I wonder if I chose wisely in not going with you and our son to America. It is too late now. In case I never see you——" Here he scratches words again.

The eleventh letter is all but final. "Dearly Loved, it is better for us not to plan the day of meeting. It is better to live life as we find it, you on your side of the world, I on mine. Let Rennie be an American. If he forgets me let it be so."

It is easy to see the story now. He is a prisoner. The city he chose has become his cell. He is no longer free. And I am not free because I love him. As long as he lives I shall not be free. . . . Let me be glad that at least a woman is at his side. Though she be not I, he has someone with him. So why do I weep?

And I continue to weep.

THIS MORNING Baba frightened me by a fainting fit. He got up as usual and I gave him his slight breakfast in his room. Then, in the midst of thanking me, he crumpled in his chair. I called to Matt to telephone Bruce Spaulden. Meanwhile I stood beside Baba's chair, not daring to move him, and frightened lest Bruce be already started on his rounds.

Luckily he was not. He came running up the gravel path from the gate, hatless and without his coat, his bag swinging from his hand. The door was open and he entered, and leaped upstairs and into the room, his thin Vermont face without a smile, and his eyes seeing nothing but his patient. I stood silent, waiting his command.

"Pull up his sleeve."

I pulled up Baba's sleeve. Into the slack old flesh of his upper arm Bruce drove the needle quickly and with skill. Then he lifted Baba in his arms and laid him on his bed.

"Cover him and keep him warm," he told me. "He will pull out of it, likely, but one of these days he won't. You aren't to be scared. Even if I were sitting right beside him when it happens I couldn't do anything."

"I'll stay by him until he wakes," I said.

"Not necessary," Bruce said. "Go about your business. Come in every now and then and see how he is."

He was packing his bag while I covered Baba and tucked the quilt about him. The morning was warm, but Baba's flesh was cool.

I looked up to see Bruce watching me.

"Come downstairs," he said.

I followed him. He sat down in the hall on the ladder-back chair near the big clock.

"This is no time to ask," he said in his abrupt way. "But I don't know as one time is better than another when a man has something on his mind. . . . Elizabeth, will you marry me?"

He was not joking. For a second I thought he was, but his intense eyes told me better.

"I am married already," I said. "My husband is in Peking."

"Might as well be dead," he muttered.

I said, "For me he lives."

Bruce got up, snatched his bag and made for the door. There he turned to look at me.

"All the same, Elizabeth," he said, "things being what they are in this uncertain world, my offer holds."

"I wish you hadn't made it," I said. "Now I'll think of it every time I see you."

"Which is exactly as I wish it," he said.

He grinned suddenly, then he was gone. And I stood there with an odd sort of feeling—not love, only a pleasant sort of female warmth. For the second time in my life a man had proposed to me.

Stupefied, I went back to Baba. He was still unconscious.

TODAY the postman brought me a letter bearing the stamp of the People's Republic of China.

"It must be from your husband," he said, and handed me the letter as proudly as though he had fetched it himself from across the westward sea.

"Thank you," I said. I knew the moment that I looked at the handwriting that it was not from Gerald. It was from—what shall I call her? I cannot use the word concubine. Yet I suppose that is what she is. I suppose the Chinese in our street in Peking call her his Chinese wife and me his American wife. But the dagger piercing me is this—if

she can write, why cannot he? Is it that he cannot bring himself to acknowledge that he desecrates our love?

I opened the letter.

DEAR ELDER SISTER:

Your letter has come. I thank you for such answer. Now it is my duty to tell you of our husband. I send this letter in the secret way. If it is found by the wrong person, then you will never see it. But I try. Now I tell you our husband is well but he is sad. He does not talk to me. He goes every day to his office, and at night he comes home. The house is as you left it. Only I cannot keep it so clean. Sometimes he complains. I tell him I cannot do all as well as you do. But I cook what he likes to eat. He does not mention your name but he keeps you in his mind as secret joy. In the night when the moon shines he walks into the courts and stares at the moon. Is it the same moon in your country? To the moon he gives his thinking of you.

His health is good except that he does not sleep much. We have no children. He told me he does not want a child. I said what of me? He said, it is better for you not to have my child because the blood is mixed. But I hope for a child. I go to temple and pray before the Goddess of Childbirth. I go in secret because they tell us not to believe in gods now. Please take care of yourself. If you were here the house would not be lonely as now. We could be friends.

YOUR YOUNGER SISTER

I feel strangely better for the letter. It is sweet and simple and I am surprised that I am not jealous. When the moon rises over these mountains in Vermont, I shall go out and stand in its light, knowing that a few hours before he has so stood. Thank you, my younger sister.

I live this strange inner life. No one in the valley could possibly understand it even if I could speak of it. And I cannot speak. But now I do most earnestly wish to leave that world in which I lived with Gerald and enter this world to which I am compelled by circumstances.

If only I could stop remembering, for I can feel Gerald cutting one cord after another between us. It is not only that he no longer writes to me. He is also denying himself the thought of me. When there was hope of our meeting again, I could feel his communion with me. On those rough hills of Szechuan, when I was at Chungking and he struggling across country, on foot, leading his students and professors westward, I could feel, especially at sunset and at moonrise, the outreaching of his heart and mind, and we were united. But now, though I send myself

across land and sea in search of him, I do not find him. He has withdrawn from me. This means one thing—he has no hope of ever seeing me again. I do not believe he has ceased to love me. It is simply that for us the earthly life is ended. And yet, I am not freed of the past.

When Bruce asked me to marry him, the words reached my ears but not my heart. They echoed in me, reverberating and empty. It is only when I enter Baba's room that meaning comes back to me, not strong and alive as it was in the house in Peking, but quiescent. I feel as one feels in the presence of ruined palaces and silent gardens, no longer used and alive. I return to Baba's room often for no other purpose than to see his ancient figure, wrapped in the Chinese gown of blue brocaded silk, sitting by the window. The few things brought with me from China, a pair of scrolls, a small jade vase, some porcelain bowls from Kiangsi, a rug as blue as the northern Chinese sky, have somehow sorted themselves out of the house and into Baba's room.

"Are you all right, Baba?" I ask.

"Quite all right," he says peaceably.

There he sits, Gerald's father, a beautiful old man, straight and tall, thin as an ascetic, his hair whiter than snow upon the mountain, his white beard uncut. He does not think. He simply is. And it is this elemental existence, pure and childlike, that compels me to remember Peking.

Oh, that dreamlike city! Everything in life was there, the palaces under their roofs of blue and gold, containing a history crowded with imperial men and women. In the wide streets the common folk took on princely airs because the city in which they lived with their ancestors was a kingly city. Even the beggars were not craven. They came out from their corners, hands outstretched but heads held high. I see the streets at night, gay with festivals, or quiet with the good plainness of daily life, lamps burning, candles lit, families gathered about the supper table, men gossiping over water-pipes, a woman nursing her little child. I see the city in the glorious fragments of sunlight piercing the yellow dust of a spring storm. I see it a vast summer garden, blue porcelain roofs and golden ornaments gleaming between the dark cedar trees. I see it under snow heavy on the roofs and in the streets, the men and children picking their way as carefully as cats, but cheerfully, their cheeks red with cold and fur caps pulled over their ears.

Winter is for married love in firelit evenings and a house enclosed in snow. The snow fell deep in Peking and the drifts against the gate were as good as any lock. The Chinese admire the beauty of snow, their painters love the white of late snow against the pink of peach blossoms or the red of berries on the Indian bamboo, but they do not like to go out in snow, their shoes being of cloth or velvet, and so Gerald and I had no visitors on snowy nights. Even the old watchman stayed prudently in his little room by the gate, and we were safely alone. We heaped the brazier with coals and we put out the candles and sat by the glow of the fire.

That was the time for love, the long night stretching ahead in hours of endless happiness. . . .

How still the Vermont mountains are, how empty of human life! It is autumn again, and the leaves are turning. What life is there in the scanty soil on these mountains that sends the sap running in the maple trees in spring and whose withdrawing in the autumn creates colours so bright and naked? The trees bleed with colour now as they bleed in March with sap.

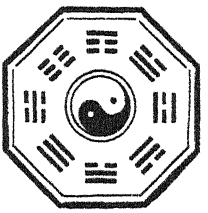
The leaves drift down and the mountains emerge in great sweeping outlines against a sky of royal blue. The work on the farm is done for the year, except for the milking twice a day, the feeding and watering of the cows and hens and gathering of eggs. Matt put up the storm windows and doors yesterday and today the weather turned warm with the same perversity that it used to do in China. But I do not go out as the Chinese farmers did and shake my fist at the Old Man in the Sky. There was a friendly critical relationship between the Chinese gods and the farming folk. The people expected their gods to look after them and to send rain and sunshine in season. Warm weather after the first festival of winter made the winter wheat grow high and so risk being frozen when the bitter days came.

A farmer spoke his mind thus to his gods:

"You old Head up yonder! What reason have you for sending down heat instead of cold? Are you drunk up there in Heaven? Is your brain muddled? Consider yourself! I warn you—no more incense, no more gifts to the temple!"

How can I explain that within two days a blizzard came down from the north? How we laughed, Gerald and I! Oh, we had so much good

laughter in our marriage. I wonder if his Chinese wife can make him laugh. It is her letters I take out now and read, not his. I try to see him through these letters, but I see only his shadow.



TONIGHT, as I open my window, a flurry of snow rushes in. I feel the flakes cold upon my face and the wind blows through my nightgown. Hurry into bed, let me draw the warm blankets about my shoulders. I will not remember how lonely I must lie. I will think of the comfort of my blankets. They are made of the wool sheared in July from my sheep. My sheep keep me warm and my cows give me milk and butter and cheese. My land gives me food and beauty to look upon. As for the blankets, when I sent in the bags of wool to the factory, I asked that they be dyed a deep pink, and they came back to me the colour of crushed roses. I comfort myself with their warmth and colour. My comfort and pleasure are in such small things. It is small things that are eternal.

TODAY, while the ground lies white under the snow and the mountains look twice their height, Rennie's first letter has come to me. I sat down in the kitchen, I let my broom fall and tore open the envelope.

"Dear Mother——"

I kissed the words and went on. He writes as if he had left home only yesterday instead of being months away. The letter is sent from a mid-western college. He does not want to go to Harvard, where his father went. He wants to be only himself, he says. So that is what he is, working his way. He is studying hard, he likes physics very much. He is rooming

with a boy named George Bowen. George Bowen has a sister. Very intelligent and rather good-looking. Tall.

"Now, Mother, you are not to get ideas. I have finished with women."

At eighteen my son has finished with women! Oh Allegra, you have hurt him very much. But every man and every woman is hurt by first love, except the rare ones, like Gerald and me, whose first love deepens into the only love.

"I shall be home for Christmas," Rennie writes. Now that is blessed news. It would be too melancholy for Baba and me to think of Christmas alone. If Rennie had not sent me this letter I would have let the day slip past, pretending that it was a day like any other. Now I shall make a plum pudding and dress a turkey. I shall make walnut creams for Rennie and begin at once to knit him a red sweater. And his clothes not mended all these months! He must bring everything home and let me see what has happened. The house is suddenly full of light and life. I dash upstairs to Baba, who is sitting placidly by the window.

"My knees are cold," he says to me in Chinese.

"You have let the rug slip to the floor, careless Baba!"

I pretend to scold him. I tell him the heavenly news.

"Rennie is coming home for Christmas, Baba. Do you understand? Say it after me, 'Rennie is my grandson.'"

He lifts patient old eyes to my face. He repeats in a quavering half-frightened voice, "Rennie is my grandson."

"He is coming home for Christmas."

"Coming home for Christmas," Baba repeats.

I kiss the top of Baba's head and fly off to inspect Rennie's room. I wonder if Matt can help me paint the walls? A pale yellow, I think——

It is four days before Christmas and Rennie comes home tonight. Meanwhile I have had two letters written in the Peking house but posted elsewhere, one in Manila, one in Bangkok. This little Chinese woman is resourceful. Gerald's letters are watched and read, doubtless, but hers she can slip into her sleeve and take with her to friends who will post them in widely separate places. I wonder what she looks like. I have wanted, and not wanted, to ask her for a photograph. But she would send it if she could. She is a chatterbox of a woman, cheerful and loving,

who sets store by photographs and keepsakes. She writes of Gerald without mentioning his name, and of the house and what they do.

"He has a cold today. The sand settles in his throat while he talks in the classroom. I have made hot ginger tea and mixed it with honey. He sips it and is better."

Yes, the sands of autumn storms used to make Gerald cough. We used to think of going to some other part of China far from the distant desert of the north-west, but Gerald, when it came to the decision, could never leave Peking. "One belongs to this city as to a country," he said. "There is no other like it. I should be an alien anywhere else."

And why did I never think of hot ginger tea mixed with honey? She takes better care of him than I did. But does she love him as much? She prattles on: "The chrysanthemums are bright and healthy this autumn. They bloom against the northern wall of the big courtyard."

That is where they always bloomed. And I planted pink ones and white ones against the wall of the small courtyard outside our bedroom.

"He is working very hard just now. There are new classes and many new students. At night he cannot sleep. If he sleeps he mutters words I cannot understand."

Does he ever speak my name? He is far away from me now. If we met I think he would still be far away. There are all these days between us in which I have no share. He would not be able to speak of them and I could not ask him about them.

I fold the letters away. Rennie comes home tonight. I have his room ready, the walls are pale yellow, the furniture is polished, his bed is made fresh, there are red berries in a bowl on the chimney piece and wood is piled in the wide old-fashioned fireplace. Snow fell again in the night and he will want to ski and so I have waxed his skis and put them in the kitchen entry. Of course I finished everything too early and time plodded, the clock did not move. I toyed with the thought of putting up the Christmas tree and then knew I must not, for he and I have kept to the custom of my childhood when my father and I went up the hill beyond the sugar-bush and cut the tree on Christmas Eve. It is important now to cling to family customs. They link the present with the past and reach into the future. If Gerald's mother had been able to draw her family into Baba's house and so given Gerald a place in the clan he would not have grown up solitary. But Baba perhaps would not allow it;

or she perhaps felt herself cut off by her strange marriage and so she became a revolutionist. Revolutions are made by those who are desolate and desperate. Now that is what I must prevent Rennie from becoming. He must somehow belong to my country, or he will become a rebel wherever he goes.

So the evening draws near. The mountains cut off the sunset but the sky is red above the snow. Baba feels the excitement in the house and he asked for his best Chinese gown, a dark maroon satin with gold buttons, and he sits in his chair by the window of his bedroom, his dragon-headed cane in his hand. He uses a smooth Malacca every day, but tonight he remembered the dragon-headed one. His white hair and long white beard make him look like an ancient Chinese patriarch, for his skin, always dark, is now leather-hued and wrinkled. Only his proud old aquiline profile declares him Scottish and not Chinese.

I have tied a branch of mountain pine and a clump of scarlet winter-green berries to the brass knocker. I station myself by the front door.

Through the twilight I see at last the twin glow of motor-car lights. He did not tell me when he was coming and so I could not meet him. The car is here. I am suddenly faint and must lean my head against the door. Then I hear the knocker thunder against the brass plate beneath it. I tug at the door and suddenly it is pushed in and there stand two tall men. One of them is Rennie, and the other is Sam, and it is Sam who speaks first.

"Hello, Mrs. MacLeod! I thought I'd come along with Rennie and see how my old gentleman is. You can throw me out if you don't want me for Christmas."

His blue eyes twinkle and glow and he throws his arm round my shoulders and kisses me soundly on my cheek. While I am stammering a welcome, I see only Rennie, standing there waiting, a slight tall dark young man, smiling. It occurs to Sam that he has been boisterous. He steps back, and Rennie comes forward and takes my hand in both of his, and kisses me lightly on the other cheek.

"Hello, Mother——"

He looks down at me, I look up at him. I hasten to speak.

"Come in—come in where it's warm. Good ski-ing weather tomorrow, Rennie!"

They come in and Rennie stands looking round. I have lit all the

lamps and I have lit the candles on the dining-room table. It is set with my best linen and my mother's old silver and a bowl of holly.

"Does it look the same to you?" I ask Rennie.

He shakes his head and does not reply. No, it does not look the same to him because he is not the same. And I discern in him a heart-breaking fear of me, his mother. He is afraid that I will try to make him what he was before, a boy and not a man. He is not willing to be my son if he has to be a boy again. I understand this in a flash of pain.

"Would you like to go to your rooms?" I asked. "Rennie, your room is ready, and I have only to put some towels in the guest-room for you, Sam. I'm glad you came."

Yes, I am glad. When I first saw him I was almost angry that a stranger had come with my son. But I know that Rennie wanted him to come so that he would not be alone with me. I must make no demands on this tall silent young man.

"How is the old gentleman?" Sam asked briskly.

"He'll be delighted to see you," I said, and hoped that Baba would remember him.

Upstairs, I opened the door of Baba's room and Sam went in. Rennie had gone to his own room.

"Well, well," Sam shouted. He descended upon Baba and shook his hand while Baba stared at him helplessly.

"Sitting here looking like an old Emperor of China," Sam bellowed amiably. "How are you, Doctor MacLeod?" He drew up a wooden chair in front of Baba.

"I am well," Baba said cautiously. He looked at me, appealing, and then at Sam. "Are you my grandson?" he inquired gently.

Sam roared. "Not quite—not quite! Don't you remember me, sir? I fetched you to the shack on my ranch. Why, we were wonderful friends!"

Baba nodded his head. He tapped his dragon-headed cane softly on the carpet.

"Sam," he said cautiously. "It's Sam."

"Right," Sam cried with delight. "Why, you're in fine shape!"

I longed to slip away to Rennie's room. If I were alone with my son surely there would be one good moment of embrace, and I would ask no more. But when I stole towards the door Sam stopped me.

"Ma'am," he said, "you won't misunderstand me when I say it's better to leave Rennie to himself for a while. He'll come back to you in good time but it'll have to be his time."

"I feel it," I said, and sat down and waited.

At last Rennie came in. He had changed to brown slacks and a tweed jacket that I had never seen before. His black hair was brushed smooth and he wore a red tie. I saw him as a man, a very handsome man. . . .

"How are you, Grandfather?" he said and he came to Baba and knelt at his side as a Chinese grandson might have done and took Baba's hand.

Baba stared at him reflectively.

"Are you my son Gerald?" he asked.

"Only your grandson," Rennie said.

They looked at each other face to face, and I saw the resemblance between them for the first time. Rennie's profile, changing with manhood, takes on the Scottish lines and not the Chinese.

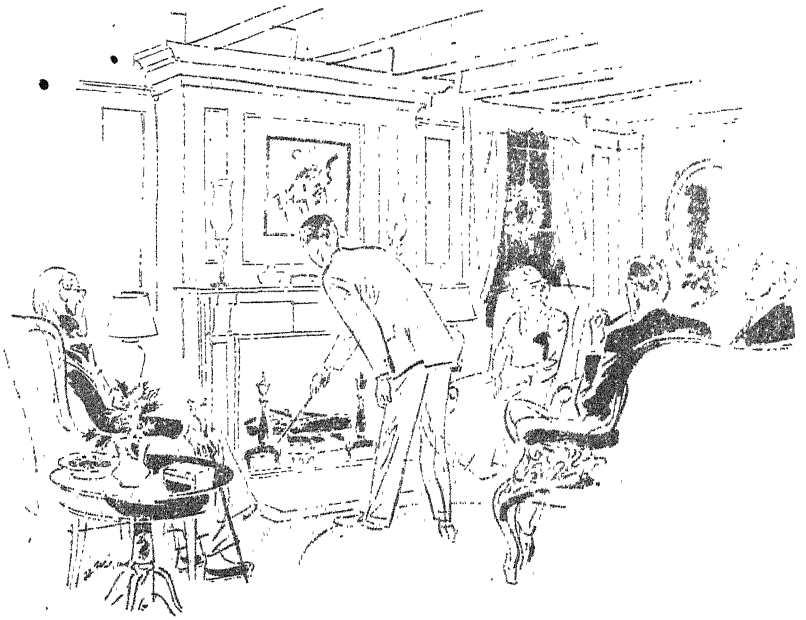
"My grandson," Baba repeated, and suddenly leaned forward and kissed Rennie on the forehead. Rennie was moved, and put Baba's hand to his cheek.

"I'm glad I came home," he said and I saw tears in his eyes.

We had a merry evening after that. Those two young men made a chair of their crossed hands and they carried Baba downstairs and he sat at the table with us. Then, for gaiety, I ran upstairs and put on my wine velvet dinner gown, which I had not worn since Gerald and I parted. The last night in Shanghai we went to dance at the Astor Hotel, and I put on this one festive gown that I had saved through all the war. We danced cheek to cheek, forgetting the crowded streets outside, and determined for a few hours to mingle with the Europeans gathered in the hotel, most of them ready to sail away for ever from the country they loved but to which they could never belong. And we knew, Gerald and I, that he would stay and I must go.

So I went downstairs, and the two young men stood up and looked at me with surprise. I was suddenly a woman, and they had not realized it before. I was glad that Rennie saw me as someone else than mother, for perhaps he will not fear me so much.

I put Rennie at the head of the table, and I sat at the foot, with Baba at my right so that I could cut his meat for him. And Rennie was suddenly gay, and began to talk, and Sam was as suddenly silent and



almost shy. They were hungry and they ate heartily. It was good to have guests at the table. I took pride in the roast lamb and the peas and the small browned potatoes. And I had remembered the apple-pie that Rennie loves, served with cheese and hot coffee.

When dinner was over Baba was lifted into the living-room and put in a chair by the fire, and I sat opposite him, and Rennie and Sam pulled up the yellow satin sofa facing the chimney-piece. We heard the door knocker. Rennie turned to me. "Do you expect someone?"

"No," I said. "I cannot imagine who would come at this hour."

I went into the hall and opened the door and Bruce Spaulden stood there, holding out a bunch of pink roses wrapped in cellophane. I took them and thanked him.

"Come in," I said. "We are sitting round the fire."

He came in and I put the roses in an old grey pottery bowl. I saw that Baba had fallen asleep.

"Ought we to take him upstairs?" I asked Bruce.

"He looks comfortable," Bruce said, "and he couldn't be more soundly asleep."

We sat down and Rennie was silent between the two men and I caught him looking at me strangely now and again. I felt suddenly happy as I had not been for a long time and soon we were all talking, and Bruce got up and went to the pantry and made coffee, for he will not drink anything else, but Rennie fetched wine and poured out glasses for himself and Sam, and the talk flowed about us.

I really belong here, I kept thinking. If I were not so lonely, I could forget Peking and at last perhaps I could even forget Gerald. I have not laughed for a long time but I found myself laughing at the three men. Each in his way was playing for my attention, Sam very brusque and Western and masculine and Bruce dark and caustic and wary, and Rennie watchful and tending the fire.

"Revolution," Sam declared, "is an inevitable process. We burst our skins, like snakes, we cast off the old encasements, and emerge afresh."

I was amazed to hear him speak without a trace of his harsh Western idiom. The ranchman's drawl was a shield. I had never seen the real man before.

Bruce drew upon his pipe, slowly and deeply. "There never was a revolution in man's history that paid its way. The end is always lost in the conflict and confusion out of which evil men rise to power."

"You can't hold back revolution for all that," Sam insisted. "Endurance has its limit. Look at China——"

The winds of Asia rushed into the warm closed room. I was swept across the sea again. By force of will I refused to go.

"Let us not talk of China," I said. "Let us never talk of China. Who knows what is happening there?"

Rennie looked up from the fire and his eyes met mine. I knew I should have to tell him. The life went out of the evening.

When Bruce was leaving he held my hand for a minute at the front door, but I could not be warm. "Thank you again for the pink roses," I said stupidly.

"When I think of roses I think of you," he said under his breath. That was much for him to say, but I could not muster a smile in reply. My heart was hammering in my breast. How can I tell Rennie so that he will not hate his father?

"Come into my room, Rennie," I said when we had said good night to Sam at the head of the stairs. "You and I have had no chance to talk. Let's light the fire and settle ourselves."

I sat in the old red velvet arm-chair that had once belonged to my Boston grandmother. He sat down in the wooden Windsor opposite me. He had lit the fire and the logs were blazing.

"I can't get used to the way you look," I said. His face has lost its boyish roundness. The cheekbones are defined, the jaw is firm. I should be hard put to it to say where Rennie came from, were he a stranger to me. Spain? Italy? Brazil?

"Tell me what you like best at college," I said.

"Maths. Maths and music."

Rennie has always loved music. This perhaps is my gift to him. Many hours of my own youth I spent at the old square piano downstairs in the parlour, but since I came home, living on the brink of final separation from Gerald, I have not been able to play.

"It's a good combination, Rennie—the combination Confucius required for the civilized man. He must know the disciplines of mathematics and music."

"They are allied," Rennie said. "They demand the same precision and abstraction. I want to be a scientist."

"Your father will be pleased."

To this Rennie did not reply. He never replies when I mention his father.

"And what about George Bowen's sister?" I inquired, half playfully.

Rennie did not look at me. His eyes were fixed upon the fire. "What about her?"

"Well, is she pretty?"

"She is not pretty—she's beautiful."

"Dark or fair?"

"Fair and calm."

"Do you like her very much, Rennie?"

"I don't know. I don't want to know, I suppose. I'd rather not be hurt again."

Here fell a silence.

"Rennie, I want to talk about your father."

He lifted his head at this, reluctantly interested.

"Have you had a letter?"

"Not recently—not from him. But I did have a—a—special letter. I must explain."

And so I began at the beginning. I told him how we met, Gerald and I. I told him how we fell in love. I told him of Peking and how in those years our love deepened and widened into a life complete in companionship.

"There are few such marriages, Rennie," I said.

Rennie is too quick for me. "What is it that you really want to say?"

"I want to tell you that what has happened is not the fault of your father nor is it mine. If the world had not split apart under our feet, we would still be living in the house in Peking."

"And why aren't we?" he demanded.

"You know," I said. "It is because of me. I am American, and your father is half American. It is the split in the world that has driven us apart, exactly as though a tidal wave had rushed between us on a beach and swept us in opposite directions."

"He could have left China," Rennie said.

"He could not."

"And why not?" Rennie insisted. His face was bitter.

"I defend your father," I said. "He is not here to speak for himself. If you must blame anyone, blame Baba. He married your Chinese grandmother without loving her, and that was the primary sin. She who knew she was not loved by her husband gave her life to her country and to what she thought was her duty. And her son ate the sour fruit, and your teeth, Rennie, are set on edge."

"Did she love Baba?" Rennie's voice was low.

"I am sure she did. She loved him, and was rejected by him. There is nothing so explosive in this world as love rejected."

"My father has rejected you," Rennie said brutally.

I denied this passionately. "He has not rejected me. He cannot reject me as long as we love each other. Love still works in us, its mercies. It is time for me to show you the letter." I rose and I opened the locked drawer of my desk and took out the letter and gave it to him. He opened the letter and read it twice, thoughtfully. Then he put it back into the envelope and placed it on the small table beside him.

"Thank you, Mother," he said.

"I have given permission to the Chinese woman," I said. "So I will also show you her letters."

Now I gave him the letters from Mei-lan. He read them quickly, his face impassive, and handed them back to me.

"I cannot understand why he has let her come into our house," he said.

His voice was so hard that I could not bear it. "We do not know how much he was compelled."

"I still ask," Rennie said, "why did he stay in Peking if he loved us?"

"You do not love your father enough to forgive him," I said.

"Perhaps that is true," Rennie agreed.

He got up and walked to the window and stood there looking out into the night. The light of the lamp shone through the glass upon the falling snow. The fire burnt suddenly blue and a log fell into the ash.

He turned to face me. "Mother, I have something to tell you, too. All that business of Allegra—it very nearly drove me back to Peking. If I am to be rejected because my grandmother was Chinese, I thought, I'd better go back to China. But I'll never go back now. I'll stay with you. This shall be my country."

I cried out, "Oh Rennie, Rennie, don't. . . . Don't decide so quickly against your father!"

"I am not deciding against him. I am deciding for you," Rennie said. And he stooped and kissed my cheek and went away.

I know my son. The decision has *not* come quickly. He has been torn between his two countries, between his father and me. And he has chosen me and mine. Oh Gerald, forgive me! I pray that you will have other sons. If I have robbed you of our son, can I help myself? It is Rennie who decides his own life. And he has as much right to decide as I had when I followed you to Peking and as you had when you would not come home with me. Yes, this is home at last, this Vermont valley.

I sat a long time before the dying fire, a weight gone from me. I am no longer alone in my own country. My son is with me. I shall be happy again, some day.

MONTHS have passed. Rennie is nearing the end of his college year. Sam has been twice to see me. He urges me to divorce Gerald, and today he flew from New York for only an hour, he said, not knowing

how this day would end. We have telegraphed for Rennie to come at once, because of what has happened. It happened this morning, when Sam was arguing with me, angry, insistent.

"You must divorce that fellow in Peking—he's no husband to you, Elizabeth!"

"I shall never divorce Gerald," I said. "He loves me."

"If you call desertion love," Sam bellowed.

"He has not deserted me," I was shouting, too, "nor I him. We are divided by history, past and present."

"He could have come home with you," Sam said stubbornly.

"Ah, but you see this is not home to him! Home is a matter of the heart and the spirit. His would have died here."

"You're still in love with him," Sam said, and he turned on me so fierce a stare that I could not defend myself.

"Can't you see that I am determined to marry you?" he cried.

"Oh, no, Sam—no—no!"

We were both breathless, both glaring at each other. Sam bent over me and I pushed him away.

"Don't——"

"Do you hate me?"

"No—not hate——"

At this moment we heard Baba fall in the room above. We heard the clatter of his cane and then so light a fall, his old bones all but fleshless, that we might scarcely have heard except for the terrible wrenching groan. I ran upstairs, Sam following me, and there Baba lay. His head had struck the stone hearth. He was dead.

WE HAD come home from Baba's funeral. Sam stayed; he and Bruce Spaulden took care of every detail for me.

Rennie arrived barely in time for the funeral. He brought with him a tall fair girl, a calm quiet girl whose every movement is slow grace.

"This is Mary Bowen," Rennie said.

"Strange, I have never heard your name," I said, and suddenly I wanted to kiss her. I leaned forward and put my lips to her smooth young cheek.

"You look like a Mary," I said.

"I'm a pretty good Martha, too," she said and smiled.

"Then Rennie is in luck," I said, "for it is not every woman who is both."

They were in love. I know the signs, how well, and I was comforted. I took their hands and between them I went upstairs to where Baba lay in his blue Chinese robe. He lay on top of the white counterpane, and I had put on his feet his black velvet Chinese shoes. Under his hands crossed upon his breast I had put his little worn copy of *The Book of Changes*.

Mary stood looking at him. "How beautiful he is," she whispered. "I wish I could have heard his voice speaking."

And she lifted Rennie's hand and held it against her cheek. From that moment I loved her as my own daughter.

This afternoon a few neighbours gathered with us under the pine tree on the mountain behind the house, and there we buried Baba. Matt helped to dig the grave this morning and we lined it with pine branches, while Mrs. Matt made the collation for the funeral feast. She boiled a ham, for she thinks a baked ham is not worth eating, and set out sandwiches and cake and tea and coffee, ready for the return from the grave.

The day was quiet and the sky mildly overcast, and the minister read certain passages from the New Testament, which I had marked because Baba had once declared to me that they were taken originally from the wisdom of Asia and perhaps from Confucius himself. "For," said Baba, "it is not accident that Jesus uttered the very words long ago spoken by Confucius and Buddha. He was in Nepal in his youth, if we are to believe folk rumours."

Now the good words fell gently and with deep mercy upon the quiet air.

After the ceremony was over, and we did not weep, neither Rennie nor I, for death is not sad at the end of a long life, we came home again. Mrs. Matt was bustling about in a black silk dress and a huge white apron and we sat in the living-room with the guests. We ate and drank and spoke quietly. In a little while they were all gone.

Bruce stopped a moment with me to search my face and tell me that I looked pale and must rest.

"You won't mourn?" he said.

"Not for Baba," I said.

"You must not mourn for anyone," he said urgently.

I could not tell him, not yet, that with Baba's death died also the symbol of the past. Baba was a link with other years and with a beloved city, with a house which I had believed my home. But Bruce's concern was comforting and, when I smiled, I saw that he longed to kiss me. Longing smouldered in his grey eyes. I was not ready. I could not bear the touch of another man's lips—not yet.

So the day ended. As Sam was leaving, he shook my hand hard. "Let me know if you want anything," he said. "I'm on call."

Suddenly he bent and kissed me on the lips and I stepped back and nearly fell.

"You don't like it," he muttered.

"No," I said honestly.

"I won't do it again," he said and went away. I am sorry he was hurt but I do not like to be kissed when I am not ready. The days of my youth are past and to a woman full grown a kiss means everything—or nothing.

In the evening Rennie and Mary and I were quietly together on the terrace, and the air was unusually mild for May. These two must go away again tomorrow. It worried them that I was to be alone, and I did not know how to make them believe that I did not mind, for indeed I do not know whether I shall mind being alone in this old house. I have no near neighbours and the forest in the valley changes strangely with the night. When the afternoon sun slants through the near trees to lie upon the beds of fern and brake, the forest is lively with light and colour. But the darkness falls swiftly, and the forest loses its kindliness. Staring into shadows growing sinister with night, I remember that for thirty miles and more forest mingles with swamp and quicksands, wherein hunters have been lost and never found. Once a woman, a botanist, was lost in the forest that surrounds my home. I do not know whether I can live here alone.

"I wish I had finished with college," Rennie said. "I wish that Mary and I were married and living here with you."

It is the first word that he had spoken to me of marriage.

"If you two are to be married, then I shall be so happy that I shall have no time to be afraid," I replied.

"We shall certainly be married," Mary said.



"The question is when," Rennie added.

"Why should there by any question?" I inquired. "If you want to be married, then marry."

Here I remembered Allegra. "Unless Mary's family has some reason of their own for delay."

"I have no family except my twin brother, George," Mary said. "Our parents died when we were children and we lived with my grandmother. Now she is dead, too."

It is interesting to discover how secretly wicked one can be. For the sake of my son I rejoiced that three innocent people were in their graves.

"You may marry when you like then," I said. "The wedding can be in this house where I was married to Rennie's father and that will make me happy."

"Thank you, Mother," Rennie said. He was lying full length upon the long terrace chair, and he got up and went to Mary's side and took her hand.

"Will you marry me on the eighteenth of June, when I shall be nineteen years old?"

"I will," she said, and smiled up at him.

The moonlight shone on her long fair hair and on Rennie's face. I thought them the most beautiful pair in the world, and my heart yearned for Gerald who could not see them. I used once to be able to reach him with my concentrated thought, but for a long time I had not done so. Now I gathered my whole energy and will upon him, far away in Peking. I tried to reach him and let him share what I saw, this beautiful cream-skinned man who is our son, and Mary, tall and fair and calm. . . . I could not reach him. Again my heart, my mind were stopped by a barrier I do not understand.

"On the eighteenth day of June this house will be ready for you," I promised Rennie and Mary.

When I went upstairs to bed an hour later, leaving them alone together on the terrace, I could almost imagine that Gerald was gone, or that he had never been, except that he had given me my son.

I AM NOT what is called psychic. I am far too earthy a woman for that. Gerald said once that I am incurably domestic. I can be absorbed in the

everyday happenings in house and garden and easily diverted at any time by the talk and antics of human beings. I am not an intellectual, nor am I a dreamer of dreams and I have never seen visions.

I make this statement because I swear that last night, at a quarter past two, I saw Gerald. I am alone in the house and have been alone for five weeks, ever since Rennie and Mary left me the morning after Baba's funeral. I have had, however, an unusual number of valley visitors.

Matt comes early and stays late, and Mrs. Matt makes the pretext of bringing his lunch the occasion for "running in," to see how I am doing. She stays and talks about Matt and his cantankerous ways. Mrs. Matt will not learn that life and man do not change, and that it is the woman who must bend if she is not to break. I know all Matt's faults by now, that he snores, and that he will not put his false teeth in a glass of water at night but leaves them to grin at her from the bedside table.

The minister comes to see me, and so does Mrs. Monroe, the teacher in our valley's one-room school. And Bruce Spaulden has been here twice, merely to drop in at breakfast time before he makes his calls, to observe me, he says, and make sure that I am not what he describes as "moping."

"Are you happy?" he asked me yesterday. I was weeding the strawberry beds in the warm corner between the main house and the annex.

"I am neither happy nor unhappy," I told him. "I am in a state of blessed calm."

"Permanently so?" he asked, tilting his eyebrows at me.

"Probably not," I said. "Probably it is a transition state between past and future."

"Not too lonely?"

"How can I be with a wedding in the house soon?"

Last night I was tired and went immediately to sleep. When I woke, as I usually do in the night, the radiant face of the bedside clock showed quarter past two. Ever since I was parted from Gerald I resolutely turn on the light and take up my book, whatever it is. I had only opened it when I knew that I was not alone. I was not frightened, only filled with wonder. I looked up and I saw Gerald, standing just inside the closed door. He was sad and thin and much older. He had a short beard, his hair was cropped very short, and he wore Chinese clothes, not the robes of a gentleman but a uniform of the sort that students used to

wear, made of dark stuff and the jacket buttoned to the throat. He smiled at me, his grave dark eyes suddenly bright. I think he put out his hand to me, but of this I am not sure for I leaped from my bed and cried out to him.

"Gerald, Gerald, oh darling——"

I was stopped by a frightful agony in his face. Then I ran to hold him in my arms, but he was gone. I stood where I had seen him stand. There was no one here and the floor was cold beneath my bare feet. I crept back into bed shivering and afraid. I have seen Gerald. I have no doubt of it. And I have seen him as he is now. It could not be a dream nor a trick of memory, else I would have seen his face as it looked when he stood on the dock at Shanghai, when we gazed at each other until the river mists crept between us and my ship sailed out to sea.

"I feel as though my very flesh was torn from yours," he had written to me.

Now he was bearded, his hair was cut short, he wore the uniform he had always hated, even when his students put it on proudly. A prisoner's uniform, he had called it. I had never seen him as I saw him now. Therefore it was no dream.

It was impossible to sleep after that. I dressed and went downstairs and walked about the house until the pale dawn gleamed behind the mountains. I do not know what a vision means. Does it signify life or death? And why was his last look an agony? How shall I ever know?



I AM NOT in the least frightened because I have seen Gerald. I am overcome with sadness but not with fear. I cannot be afraid of Gerald in

whatever form he comes to me. I have always laughed at tales of dead people who appear to their loved ones. I have never believed in ghosts and spirits. I say to myself that there is some trick of sight and subconscious which betrays my common sense. Then I find myself leading a conversation to the subject of distant persons who suddenly appear before those who think of them, although I tell no one that I have seen Gerald.

Mrs. Matt, for example, declares that she has seen the face of her mother, who lived and died in Ireland. "It was on a bright Easter morning," Mrs. Matt said solemnly. "I'd had a grand fight with Matt the night before and I was in no mood for church. I put on my old clothes and scrubbed the kitchen floor. Matt yelled at me to come to church with him and the children—six of them we had by then. But I wouldn't go and he marched off, leaving me on my knees in a swirl of soap and water. When the house was quiet-like, I got up and put away my rag and pail and I washed myself and put on a clean nightygown and laid myself in a clean bed to sleep back my strength. It was then I saw my mother in resurrection. She was in white, like an angel, but her hair was down her back in a little grey pigtail as she always had it for the night. And she said to me, 'Poor soul, ye're only a woman, and ye must tak' it as best ye can.'

" 'True, Mother mine,' I said, and went off to sleep like a babe, and when I woke, Matt was back and he'd fed the children and himself and I got up restored."

A foolish story, but Mrs. Matt believes what she saw.

This afternoon I went to the small library in our nearest town and found half a dozen books on dreams and visions. I am half ashamed of wanting to read them, for I have no faith in second sight. But I ask myself, if a log of wood, a length of pure matter, can be transmuted into energy before my eyes, into ash and flame and heat, cannot a living body, a brilliant mind, a deep and spiritual soul be transmuted into its own likeness but a different stuff? I have embarked upon a quest. I go in search of the one I love. Is Gerald living or is he dead?

THE QUEST ended today in a way so simple, so tragic, that I have no need of further search. A letter from Mei-lan, posted this time from

Calcutta, tells me of Gerald's death. She is still in Peking, awaiting, she tells me, the birth of Gerald's child. By some means she smuggled the letter out of China and into India. Perhaps a visiting delegation of Indian diplomats contained one who was Gerald's friend.

The letter is short and written in haste. There are blots on the paper —tears perhaps. Its message is simply this: Gerald was shot while trying to escape from Peking. She did not know that he had planned to escape.

"I think he longed to see you," she writes. "I think he dreamed to go somehow to India."

He was always watched, of course. They never trusted him. I do not know whether among the servants there was one who betrayed him. He was not good at packing clothes or making practical arrangements.

"He told me nothing," she writes. "I think he wished no blame to fall on me. I can always say I do not know."

Gerald was shot just outside his own gate. He got no farther than that. It was midafternoon, the sun was shining, he appeared to be returning to his classes at the university. The gateman saw a man in a hateful uniform step from behind the corner. When Gerald came near the man shot him with a pistol at close range. Then he disappeared. The gateman dared not shout. He lifted Gerald in his arms and brought him inside and laid him on the stones of the main court. Then he locked the gate.

"We buried him secretly in the small court outside his bedroom," Mei-lan writes.

Midafternoon in Peking would perhaps be quarter past two here in our valley, quarter past two in the night. Dare I believe?

I shall never know. All that I do know is that my beloved is no more. In this world, I shall not see his face again.

THERE IS no way to answer the letter, and so I have destroyed it. I wrote to Rennie that his father was dead.

"He made up his mind, it seems, to come to us. That is what she believes—his Chinese wife. He tried to live without us and he could not. Love was stronger in the end than country, stronger than history. This is our comfort. This is the message he sends us, by means of his death. It is enough for us to know. It is enough to make you forgive him,

Rennie. Please forgive him! It will make life so much easier for me, so much more happy, if I know you have forgiven your father."

Here I paused to consider whether I should tell Rennie that I had seen Gerald at the moment after he had died. His spirit escaping his body came home to me, to be remembered for ever. Then I decided that I would not tell Rennie. He would not believe, and perhaps I do not wish to test my own faith.

Rennie's reply was swift. "I do forgive him, Mother. I forgive my father freely and with love. I do this for my own sake. If it makes you happy, so much the better. And I have told Mary."

TONIGHT is the eve before the wedding day. It occurs to me that this small book will not be complete unless I tell the story of the wedding, the story which really began that day, long past, upon which I, a gay and heedless girl brimming with ready love, let my heart concentrate upon a tall slender young man, intent upon his books, a studious reserved young man in whom I divined a profound and faithful lover. I suppose, to be honest, that what I saw first in Gerald was a man so beautiful to look at that I was startled into love. I said to Mary this evening when we were washing the supper dishes together and Rennie was smoking his pipe on the terrace, "Mary, my dear, I hope that Rennie will be a good lover and husband to you. I had such a good lover and husband in his father, and I hope the capacities are inherited."

The tall lovely girl smiled her calm smile. "I am sure Rennie has inherited his father's graces," she said.

"I had sometimes just to suggest a thing or two to his father," I said.

"I will remember that, Mother," she said.

It was the first time she had called me "Mother," and I was overcome with a new joy and stood, dish in one hand and towel in the other. She laughed then and put her arms round me and kissed the top of my head. She is that much taller than I. And I smelt the sweet scent of her bosom and was glad for my son's sake that she is a sweet-smelling woman, her breath as fresh as flowers.

THE WEDDING day has dawned mild and bright. Early in the morning George Bowen drove up to the gate in an old and dusty grey convertible,

and I saw him for the first time, a tall fair young man, with the same air of calm that his sister, Mary, has. He stepped over the door of the car and sauntered into the house. I liked him at first sight. He cuffed Rennie amiably, pulled Mary's ear affectionately, and spoke to me as though he loved me.

"I know you very well," he said. "I've wanted to meet you ever since I first saw Rennie."

"Sit down to breakfast with us, George," I said.

George is studying nuclear physics. I had been a little afraid of him when Rennie talked about him. I saw a young man, brilliant, hard, perhaps unloving, as I suppose scientists must be nowadays. Instead here he was, kindly, affectionate, a fine friend for any woman's son. Between these two for wife and brother, Rennie has his world to grow in.

"Eggs, George?" I asked.

"Please, fried on one side," he said, and folded his legs under the table in the breakfast alcove in the kitchen. I try not to be the sentimental motherly female we women are supposed to be, but I confess my heart was won when I saw how George Bowen enjoyed his food.

And all through this day he has made himself useful. He persuaded the vacuum cleaner to work again, he carried chairs and cleaned the garage and was approved by Matt. And best of all was his tender understanding of Rennie and Mary.

These two wanted no big wedding, and so about four o'clock in the afternoon they came into the house from wandering in the forest, and they went to their rooms to bath and change into their wedding garments.

Mrs. Matt was in the kitchen with a couple of women neighbours to help with the simple refreshments and she gave me a push.

"Get upstairs and dress yourself," she ordered me.

"It won't take fifteen minutes for that," I said.

"Then see if the bride don't need a pin or two," she said. "I remember very well myself that I needed a pin to the front of my corset cover, I was breathin' that hard."

I went upstairs then, and when I had put on my pale-grey silk frock I knocked on Mary's door and she called to me to come in. She was dressed and was standing by the window, looking out over the hills. Her wedding gown was white organdie, with fine hand embroidery at

the hem and the neck. She had made it herself, and it was exactly right for her.

Round her neck was a little gold chain and a locket with Rennie's picture inside.

"Your bouquet is downstairs," I said. "Shall I fetch it now?"

The guests were already coming up the path, and the minister was in the living-room.

In the morning we had cut flowers from the fields and put them into bouquets with delicate fronds of brake. But I had a few of my precious roses for Mary's bouquet. We cannot grow roses outdoors here in our cold valley, but I lift my rose bushes in the autumn and bring them into the cellar to sleep, where it is cool and dry and dark, and in the spring I set them out. This year I forced half a dozen to make roses for Mary. They are pale pink and pale yellow, and I cut six half-opened buds this morning and made them into a cluster and set their stems into iced water to keep them from opening too wide.

"Please, Mother," she said.

I went away at once for I heard Rennie leave his room. When I came back with the roses he was standing in front of her, holding her hands in his. I knew very well the look in my son's eyes as he stood looking at his bride. I saw it long ago in his father's eyes for me.

The wedding was perfect in simplicity. The valley people gathered in our living-room, only twenty or so for we invited no summer folk. When they were all there, Rennie and Mary clasped hands and went to the minister and stood before him. He rose from his chair, and took his little book from his pocket and spoke the few words that made them husband and wife. After the ceremony was over, the guests surrounded the young bride and groom, and I stood aside and wept quietly because they were so beautiful, until Bruce Spaulden fetched me a cup of fruit punch.

"Occupy yourself with this, my dear," he said, and would not leave my side.

Mrs. Matt set forth the wedding cake she had made, a noble three-tiered confection. Mary cut the slices with Rennie's help, and they exchanged silver goblets, each half full of the sweet wine I make every summer from wild blackberries, while the guests enjoyed the sight of them.

Then, quietly, in the midst of the eating and drinking, the two went upstairs and changed to their travelling clothes and came down again, and waving good-bye they ran through the room, but waited for me at the car.

There my son swept me into his arms and kissed my cheeks and Mary put her arms about us both, and so I let them go. One by one the guests went away. George Bowen stayed to put away chairs and carry dishes to Mrs. Matt in the kitchen.

When he left he stooped to kiss my cheek.

"Good-bye, dear George," I said, "and come back often."

"I will," he said and then without the slightest sentimentality he said, "Shall I call you Mother, too, since now you are Mary's mother?"

"Do," I said gladly.

He winked his left eye at me. "Except you're too young to be a mother to three great gawks."

"Nonsense," I said.

He laughed and cantered down the front steps and stepped into his grey wreck of a car, without opening the door, and went off in a gust of smoke and gravel.

Now only Bruce was left and he stayed the evening with me. He knows that Rennie's father is dead. Rennie told him.

"How did you say it?" I had asked Rennie, half wishing he had not told.

"I said, 'My father is dead in Peking. My mother will live here in the valley. But Mary and I cannot live here where there are no laboratories.' "

"A man must go where his work is," Bruce agreed.

"Well, your work is here," Rennie said bluntly, "and you must be my mother's friend."

"I want to be that and whatever more she will accept me for," Bruce said.

Telling me this a few days ago, Rennie looked straight into my eyes. "Mother, you will please me very much if you decide to marry Bruce."

"Oh, Rennie, no," I whispered. "Don't—don't ask it."

"I don't ask it," he said. "I merely say that I shall be happy if you do."

To this I said nothing. It is still too soon, and perhaps it will always be too soon.

It was comforting, nevertheless, to have Bruce spend the evening with

me, when everyone else was gone. I lay on the long chair, and he sat near me and smoked his old brier pipe and said very little. The silence was comforting. I was very near telling him about Gerald, and the house in Peking, and all that has happened to me. I thought of it while the evening wind made gentle music in the pines and the mountains subsided into shadows. I thought of Rennie, too, and of how he had been born, and this led me to Mei-lan, whose child was being born perhaps upon this very day. But in the end I said nothing and silence remained sweeter than speech. When Bruce rose to say good night, my life and love were still hidden within me.

"Thank you, dear Bruce," I said. "You are my best friend now."

He held my hand a long moment. "I'll let it go at that, but only for the present," he said. He put my hand to his cheek and I felt his flesh, smooth-shaven and cool. He said no more, and he went away. After that I was suddenly very tired, but sweetly so and without pain, and I went upstairs and to my bed.

DAYS HAVE passed again and I am already expecting Rennie and Mary to come home for the summer. I have had one more letter from Peking.

"It is my duty," Mei-lan insists, "to tell you that I have borne a son. He is like his father. His skin is white, his hair is dark but soft and fine. His frame is large and strong. My mother says he will be tall. I am astonished to have such a child. We two women, my mother and I, we will devote ourselves to bringing him up well, for his father's sake and for yours."

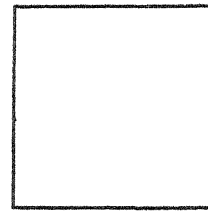
Mine? Have I aught to do with her child? Then I remember that this child is Rennie's half-brother. It is possible that some day they will meet.

The ways of nature and of life are strange and deep. They are not to be understood. In the midst of angers and of wars love's secret work goes on, and binds us all by blood, and this whether love is denied or love is bestowed.

FOR YOU began it, Baba, you know you did. When the young pure American girl you loved would not love you enough to come to Peking for your sake, you flouted love, you said it did not matter and you took

a woman whom you could not love. But she loved you, she bore your son, and one day I saw him and loved him utterly, and I went to Peking and made his city mine, until I was sent forth again, alone and for ever parted from my love. Yet here are two grandsons, both yours, a globe between them. And because they are yours, they belong together somehow, and they will know it some day.

"What do you say to that, Baba? What do you say to that, old Baba, you lying up there on the mountain under the big pine tree?





Pearl S. Buck

PEARL BUCK, the world-famous novelist and Nobel Prize winner, was born in West Virginia when her missionary parents were home on leave from China; they took her back with them when she was a few months old. Eventually she married an American in China, brought up a daughter, and began to write the short stories and novels that were to make her one of the most celebrated literary figures of our time. Much of her work, like her first record-breaking best-seller, *The Good Earth,* deals with the Chinese people, whom she has called "the easiest people in the world to love."

The cause of interracial understanding has always been close to Pearl Buck's heart. She is not, however, primarily a writer with a message; first and foremost she is a great and prolific storyteller, the author of forty-seven books. Her most recent interest is the theatre; she is writing an original play, and is working with composer Frank Loesser on a musical comedy. She lives with her husband, Richard J. Walsh (who is also her publisher), on a dairy farm in Pennsylvania. They have five adopted children.

Condensations of two of her previous books have appeared in Reader's Digest Condensed Books: *The Hidden Flower* (Autumn 1954) and *My Several Worlds* (Autumn 1956).

BON VOYAGE

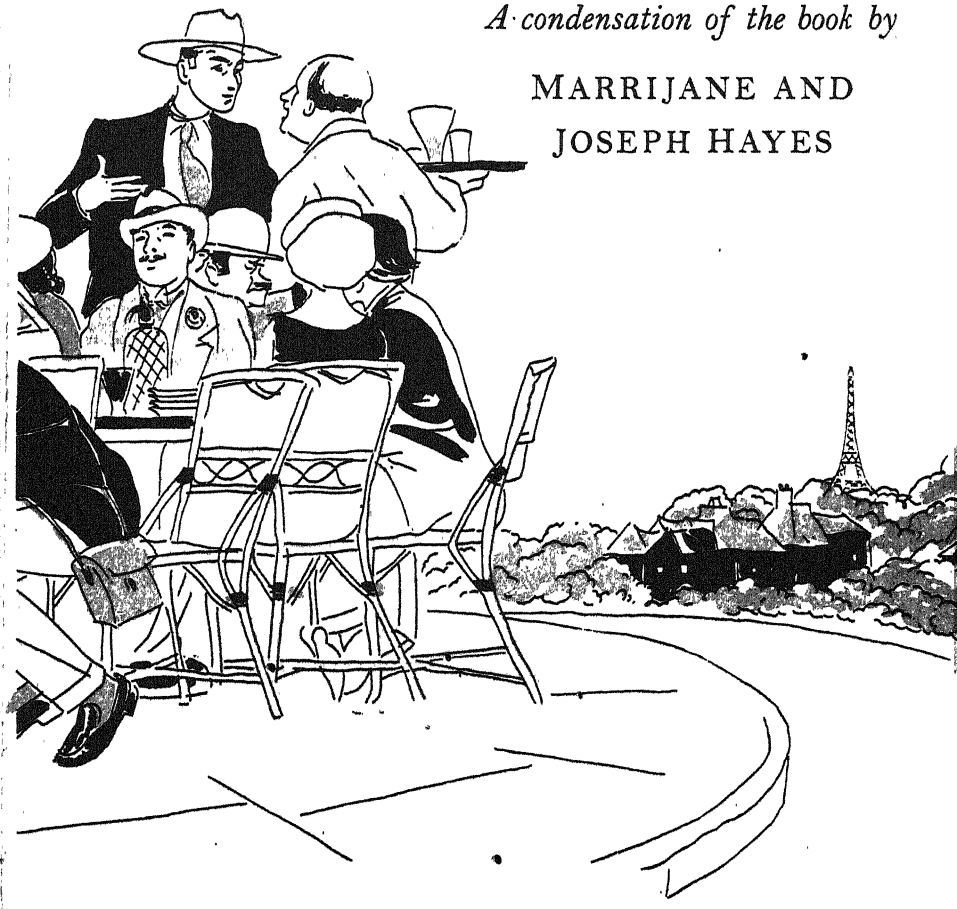


Illustrations by Harry Beckhoff

BON VOYAGE

A condensation of the book by

MARRIJANE AND
JOSEPH HAYES



"Bon Voyage" is published by André Deutsch, London



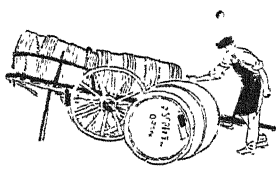
on Voyage is a blithe account of a dream come true. The Willards were newlyweds when they started saving for a trip to Paris. By the time they set sail from the New World they had company: Amy, a beautiful daughter of marriageable age; Elliott, a world-weary teen-ager; and Skipper, a twelve-year-old dynamo.

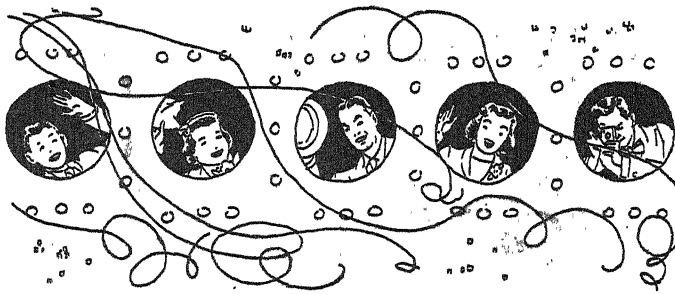


Rocketing about Europe, they managed to do everything that good tourists should, and in the process they learned a lot—about history, food, architecture. But they learned even more about romance, as the game is played in the Continental manner.

"Highly entertaining."

—Hilary Seton in *The Sunday Times*





CHAPTER 1

THERE'S nothing like a picture for bringing things back to you—especially when it's in colour and especially when it's a moving picture and especially when it's of you. That's how come I'm sitting here late at night, dictating this into a tape-recorder. Last evening we were sitting in the living-room with the projector whirring away, maybe a little nervous about what we were going to see, when my son Elliott finally got the contraption focused and then *voilà,* up there on that white sheet was the whole darn Willard family staring back at itself. (*Voilà* is one of those words that I picked up last summer, but I'm careful where I use it because I wouldn't want anyone to think I was showing off just because I spent a few weeks in France.)

Well, anyway, these were home movies, and I expect they were as good—or as bad—as most home movies. I certainly don't make any claims to being a photographer; fact is, I'm in the general contracting business. My son Elliott took most of the pictures. He was always right there and ready every time something happened. I began to suspect, while I watched the movies, that Elliott took a kind of backhanded delight in being right there just when one might have wished to heaven he'd stayed at home in Terre Haute, Indiana, where he claimed he wanted to stay in the beginning. You see, this camera had a telescopic

lens fitted on it—which can make a man look pretty foolish through its sneaky little eye.

Elliott has got just one trouble—he's eighteen. Just to take an example—while we were sitting there waiting for a shot of the family in front of the Arch of Triumph in Paris—well, what we saw was a split-second view of the Arch and then a long, lingering view of a good-looking French girl climbing out of one of those low-slung French taxis. Elliott's interest began down round the ankles and then moved up. About the time the camera reached her face, this girl happened to catch sight of Elliott, I guess, and she let go with a dazzling smile, and that picture jumped up and down as if the poor boy's heart was trying to batter the camera to bits.

When my daughter Amy's turn came, you could recognize her shots without any trouble because they all had a sort of excited jiggle. During the trip, Amy didn't relish taking pictures anyway; she preferred to be *in* them. When you're twenty-one and as pretty as Amy, that's only natural, isn't it?

Maybe I'd better go back and tell you how this whole thing started—this trip, I mean.

Back in 1933, when we hadn't been married long, my wife, Katie, and I saw a newsreel of a parade in Paris, and in the background was the Eiffel Tower. So I made the historic remark about how it'd be nice to climb that tower some day. That did it. Next thing I knew, the house was cluttered up with travel folders and photographs of ships and I began to examine the bank-book and, well, it just didn't make sense, but I got pretty excited. Anything seems possible when you're twenty-odd years old and been married less than two years.

What happened next caused the travel folders to be put away. We didn't talk about Paris while Katie was pregnant; we had too many other exciting things to talk about. But if you imagine she forgot, you just don't know my wife. Why, when she was sitting up in the hospital bed, with Amy no bigger than a doll in her arms, she said to me, "Amy will love Paris, won't she?"

Three years later Elliott put in an appearance. The Christmas he was seven—well, *you* know what he built with his Erector Set, right there under the Christmas tree. It sort of leaned to one side, but there was no mistaking what it was meant to be.

In the years that followed, we kept the family savings account chalked up on the kitchen blackboard. While I was in the Army during the war, we added a comma to it; and after I was released from service and started into business for myself it looked as if maybe we could make it when, well, Katie didn't really believe it herself at first, but it was true. And once Skipper arrived, you couldn't really be disappointed. Skipper is twelve years old and no matter how he behaves now (every once in a while, that is) he was about the most lovable baby you ever saw. The comma disappeared from the blackboard, but we put it back just as soon as we could, and one day Katie convinced me that for the last three years it hadn't actually been the money that kept us at home, but my business—which was true. I'd been working hard to build it up and ploughing money back into it in order to make more money. As Katie said, "What's the point, Harry? We don't know how much longer we'll all be together now." So Katie announced to the children, "We're sailing in June." After all that time, it was hard to believe.

You had to believe it, though, when you found yourself packed in a taxi in New York City, heading towards the Hudson River. When a ship's horn blasted, not too far away, Amy let out a shrill blast of her own: *"Listen! Did you ever hear anything so thrilling in your life?"*

Elliott swung round and fixed Amy with a disgusted expression. "Do you want them to hear you back in Indiana?"

Skipper whipped round too. "That whistle doesn't sound very big," he said. "I thought you told me the *Queen Mary* was a *big* ship. Why, heck, Amy can make more noise than that without even trying."

Amy was saying, "You can tease me all you want. I don't care about anything, I'm so happy!" She made it sound like a song.

Then, directly ahead, I saw it. The *Queen Mary* was a mighty big ship. I don't mind admitting it just about took my breath away. I turned to see whether Katie had seen it—and she had. She was all doubled up, peering out of the windscreen up front, and she was *young*. She was twenty-one again, and her eyes looked as though somebody'd just handed her the *Queen Mary* for a present. There are times when a man feels lucky and proud and humble all at the same time. That was one of those times. Katie was going to Europe, the way she always wanted to go, and I was taking her!

The taxi stopped at the pier entrance, and we spilt out on both sides; but Elliott managed to disentangle himself completely, as though he didn't really want to be considered part of our group. Even after we turned our luggage over to a porter and started up inside in the lift, Elliott stood kind of turned away, as if he didn't really know any of us. "What's the matter with Elliott?" I whispered to Katie.

"He still doesn't want to go, dear," Katie said. "It's that girl. You know, Ruth Hamilton."

Ruth Hamilton was a skinny little child back home who wore tight blue jeans and had a black fringe. She called everybody chum. Including me. Well, if Elliott thought that he was going to throw a wet blanket on things just because of a chit of a girl with a black fringe——

The lift stopped. Then the door behind me slid open, and everybody started to push and I stumbled backward, with my hat slipping sideways, before I got my balance and was able to take Katie's arm. Amy and Elliott glided past, walking fast, and Elliott said, out of the corner of his mouth, "Great start, Pop."

"There it is, Harry," Katie said as we started past the gangways. "See? Where it says Cabin Class Passengers Only."

The way she was holding my arm, her excitement kind of rippled through our arms together. I said, "It'll be fun to roam about the boat before she sails. Thank the Lord we don't know anyone in New York so there won't be any of those *bon-voyage* parties."

"Hmmm," Katie replied. "You can't tell, dear. Some well-meaning relative might——"

I felt a shiver inside. "I thought your parents wrote they couldn't make it for the sailing," I said.

"They may want to surprise us. Please, Harry, act surprised and happy when we get to the cabin. You always complain about parties and then have a better time than anyone else."

I started to say, not if it was one of her parents' parties, but I didn't. I wasn't going to throw a pall on things for Katie.

We lined up at the cabin-class gangway and, just as Elliott joined us, I caught sight of Amy. Her face was lifted up, and she was talking to someone I'd never laid eyes on before. He was almost as tall as I am, and he had reddish hair, crew cut.

When we were all on board Amy introduced us to him. His name was Nick O'Mara. He said, "Please don't blame your daughter for speaking to me. I spoke first."

Just the way he said it, I put him down in my book—too smooth. I'm not prejudiced and usually I like people, but I just didn't care for this boy's manner, or the way he'd picked up Amy or, for that matter, the way she kept hanging on to every word he said and pretty soon Katie and I left them talking and headed for our cabins.

What Katie had said about my always complaining about parties and then having a better time than anyone else—that's absolutely true. That may be because I don't drink much: Katie and I don't circulate in the martini circuit back home. Anyway, by the time I'd had a drink at that *bon-voyage* party, it didn't look so bad, in its own peculiar way. Our two cabins were jam-packed with Katie's parents and a lot of people I'd never seen before, and everybody rushed over and kissed Katie, and she looked all flushed and happy.

Everybody began talking at full tilt, and it seemed they had all been to Europe at least once, and some of them had practically lived their entire lives there. A little fellow who had on one of those narrow suits that's cut short in the sleeves and has hardly any lapels at all but is supposed to be the best kind of suit you can buy came up to me and said, "Great girl, Katherine. Have you known her long?"

"A few years," I said.

"Are you from Greenwich? I've never seen you round there."

"I'm from Terre Haute," I said. "My name's Willard."

"You don't say?" he said. "So *you're* the one." He peered at me with his eyes half closed. "You don't tell me."

Well, there wasn't much I could say to that, so I didn't. I was beginning to feel the need of fresh air, but when I started to leave the room a woman stepped right into my path. She wasn't young and she wasn't old and she had a sly look on her face, as if you and she knew a secret. She held an unlighted cigarette between her fingers.

"You're Harry Willard," she said, and she made it sound like some sort of guilty secret between us. I nodded, and she said, "Give me a light, Harry. Please." So I fumbled round for a match, and she pushed back the veil on her hat a little and I lit her cigarette. She drew in smoke, very deep, and let it out through her nose, all the time keeping

her eyes on mine. "I've been watching you, Harry, ever since you came in. You saw me."

I couldn't remember seeing her watching me. "Well, maybe I did notice," I said, and she smiled in a satisfied way.

"I'm Frieda Harrington," she said. "Now you must tell me what you were thinking about, standing off there by yourself and watching all of us. Tell me what you thought the first time you looked at me. The very first thing that came to your mind!"

Now I don't like to insult a woman, so I said: "The first thing? It was . . . what kind of perfume is that she's got on?"

Her voice grew low and husky. "You like my perfume, Harry?"

Well, I hadn't intended her to take it just that way. "What I meant was . . . there's only one thing in the world I'm allergic to, and that's perfume. It makes me sneeze."

She drew herself up as if she was about to explode and then she whirled round on her high heels; and as she went away I heard her say, "Katherine did marry a backwoods boy, didn't she."

I sneezed. The way I let go, I bet the captain up on the bridge sent a sailor down below to see which engine blew a gasket. Then I got another glass of champagne and pushed my way into the passageway.

Right here I'd better explain about how Katie came to marry me. She came out to Terre Haute one summer to visit a girl who'd gone to high school with us and then gone East to Smith, the same college Katie was going to. To tell you the truth, when I met Katie she didn't impress me very much. She had this way of talking, all bright and in a rush and with all the right words; and besides, she seemed so *sure* of herself, the way she danced, and played tennis, and all that. And Katie thought I was too tall, too thin, too stand-offish. The funny thing is, she was convinced I was too sure of myself, because, she said, I was so relaxed and quiet all the time.

Well, one night a bunch of us were out on what I called a weeny roast and Katie called a wiener roast, and somehow we got involved in a silly argument about how you pronounce it.

Finally Katie and I were kneeling there, practically yelling at each other across the camp-fire; and I remember the way her face looked, lit up by that fire and angry and lovely, and I kept getting madder and

madder, and so did she, until somebody said this was a private feud, and then they all went off and left us alone, and I got up and marched round the camp-fire and I said that I hardly ever lost my temper like that and I didn't like it and Katie stood up, her eyes blazing, and right then I took her into my arms and I kissed her, and she kissed me, too. And that was just about it. I knew then, just like that, that I was going to live the rest of my life with this girl, only I didn't know how. I was just an ordinary carpenter in those days and, it being the Depression, there wasn't a lot of building.

After she went back East, I waited a few miserable weeks, till I couldn't stand it any longer, and then I hopped on a train to Connecticut and found her house and, after walking round the block about sixty times, I worked up enough courage to go to the door and knock. Katie came to the door, and the first thing she did, she burst into tears. She introduced me to her family, and then she and I went out in her roadster, and I remember telling her about all the things I'd been thinking about on the train—the better ways there were to build houses, and the new materials that so far builders round Terre Haute hadn't taken advantage of, all sorts of things that I didn't even know I knew. And at the end Katie said, "If you're asking me to marry you, Harry, you don't have to promise me anything." Then, of course, her family raised about seven kinds of Cain and her father made me feel pretty bad about all I'd be depriving her of, only Katie stood right up to them. She said she was in love and that was enough; but when her father gave her away, I had to feel sorry for the old boy, no matter how happy I was myself, because he looked as though he was climbing up the guillotine.

So when Frieda Harrington called me a backwoods boy it all came flooding back to me.

I started down the corridor, not exactly knowing or caring where I was going, and there was Elliott slouched on a big leather couch near the lifts, looking glum and bleak. I said to myself, You've got to help the poor kid: this wasn't the spirit you started a holiday in. Here he was, just out of high school, not knowing what he wanted to do, trying to decide whether to go into the Army or wait till he'd had some time at college—all the problems kids his age are facing these days.

I sat down beside him and I thought, What can I say to the boy?

So I said, "Uhh," because "Uhh" is what I invariably say when I'm on the brink of trying to hold a serious conversation with Elliott.

There was a pause and then he said, "Pop, is it too late for me to get off this boat?"

"Ell, what would you do if I said no?"

"I'd hop on the next train for home. You mean I *can?*"

That's the kind of a fix Elliott can put you in. "No, I don't mean anything of the sort!" I said. "Look, Ell, the ship's crawling with pretty girls. Why don't you find yourself one?"

"Pop, you just don't understand anything."

That's a sort of theme song with Elliott, and it made me forget my tact and all my good intentions, too.

"Listen, Elliott," I said, "you listen to me. Nothing—nobody—is going to spoil this holiday for your mother. So you cheer up; because if you pull any of this long-face hocus-pocus after we sail, I'll throw you overboard!"

Then I turned round and went down the stairs. That was the way things always seemed to go with Elliott and me. Katie said it was his age but sometimes I got to feeling it might be my fault. For instance, I was all burnt up because I'd been called a backwoods boy, and how could a man be sure he exploded at his kid because of what the kid actually did or because he was all worked up about something else to begin with? It's questions like that that plague a man.

Then I began to think about the things I was supposed to do, like arranging for a table in the dining-room, so I found the mess steward's table, got in line and waited. I could see the deck from where I stood, and I saw Amy pass by, still talking to that young Nick O'Mara. I can't explain the way I began to feel. Back home the house was always filled with boys dating Amy, and I always got a kick out of it. But I knew those guys and their families. This young fellow, who walked along as though he owned the ship, he didn't seem like Amy's kind. Too sophisticated. Too smooth. Only that wasn't fair. Here I was finding fault with somebody just because he didn't behave the way the people I knew behaved. That made me as prejudiced as those people who thought I was a backwoods boy. But I reckon I sensed even then that this young fellow might threaten the family somehow.

I was still a couple of passengers away from the mess steward when a

gong sounded. Then a steward came in from the deck, beating the gong and saying something about visitors going ashore. Immediately behind the steward marched Skipper, keeping step with him, and every time the man struck the gong, Skipper said, "Booooooooong-booooooooong." People were pointing and smiling and the steward was ignoring it completely. Behind me, a woman's voice cooed, "Isn't he *darling?* Isn't he *cute?*"

And a man's voice grunted, "Little demon. Why'd anybody in their senses want to take a kid along to Europe?"

So, after that remark, I arranged for the children to eat at an early mess and for Katie and me to eat later. I felt better, even if it did mean eating supper later than I like.

Back in the cabin, I found Katie and her relations in a huddle, and everyone else gone. And I could tell from the way Katie looked up when I came in that she and her people had been talking about her sister, Elsie, who lived in Paris.

Katie knew how I felt about her younger sister. What I felt was this: if a thirty-year-old woman decides to live in Paris and decides not to marry, well, people should let her alone. If she wanted to be a Bohemian, let her be one. Katie's folks were always trying to get her to come home and I knew they'd been asking Katie to help from the way Katie's father wheeled round and lifted his voice and said, "Why, here's Harry back among the living!"

He didn't fool me though, because I knew darn well he wasn't *that* glad to see me.

He took my arm and patted me on the back. "Harry, did you arrange for the deck-chairs? And what about the bath steward?"

"What about him?"

Katie's father started for the door. "Don't worry, I'll arrange it all." He kissed Katie, shook my hand and went out.

Then Katie's mother began to kiss Katie, both almost crying, and then Katie's mother turned towards me and said, "Take care of her, Harry. Take care of our little girl."

When she said that, it gave me a funny sort of feeling that Katie was a little girl and that I'd better take care of her. It was about the first time Katie's mother had seemed human, so I gave the old girl a kiss on the cheek.

After her mother was gone, Katie started straightening up, the way she would at home. Then she said just what I knew she was going to say: "I think everyone had a good time, don't you?" After you've lived a certain length of time with a woman, it's kind of astonishing the way you get to know just what she's going to say, like after a party, for instance.

"Just fine," I told her. "Now let's get up on deck."

So we went up on deck, where the wind was blowing and the ship's horn bellowing like a bull caught in a barbed-wire fence and everybody was laughing or crying, but all having a fine time.

Just then Amy materialized behind us, her arm looped through young O'Mara's.

"Nick's been to Europe six times!" she cried. "His mother lives in London—she's a famous actress! And she's married to an Englishman now, and her last husband was a White Russian!"

I was saying to myself, I was right, I was right from the beginning. "Mighty interesting life you've had, Mr. O'Mara," I said.

"Nicholas is an architect!" Amy cried.

"Well, not exactly, Amy," the young man said. "I've just finished my graduate work at Yale."

"With honours, and offers from all sides. And his sketches won some very important prize," Amy said. "And he's going over now to visit his mother!"

"Well," I heard Katie say, "we certainly do know all about you now, don't we, Mr. O'Mara?"

O'Mara said, "I know a lot about all of you too, Mrs. Willard."

"I'll bet you do," Katie said, narrowing her eyes just a fraction at Amy.

Then, all of a sudden, we realized that the ship was moving. I grabbed Katie's arm and Amy let go with a shrill squeal.

"Nick!" And she was off towards the front of the ship.

"See you again, I trust," Nick said.

"It looks that way," I said. "It sure looks that way, O'Mara."

When they'd gone, Katie said, "Harry, what have you got against that boy? I never saw you behave like that before."

"I had a hunch about that fellow right from the start. Broken home! Actresses! I thought he had a crazy background."

"What does it matter, dear? Amy isn't marrying the boy."

"I'll say she's not marrying him!"

Just then Skipper came running. He stopped a few yards away and stood there, looking up at us.

"You weren't in the room!" he said accusingly. "Where have you been?"

"I was helping the steward clear the ship," I told him. *"Booooong-booooooong!"* But about half-way through the second *booooooong,* I stopped because Skipper's lower lip was trembling. So I stooped down and straightened his tie and said, "You ought to know we'd be on the ship somewhere, son. We wouldn't get off without you, you know."

"Well," Skipper said, "you ought to tell a guy where you're going, that's all. This is a darn big place."

He leaned over the railing and waved to everybody back on the dock. He said, "They've got a whole city on here. Post office, barber's-shop, swimming-pool. They've even got a gym." I moved over to stand beside him, and he said, without looking round, "I wasn't worried, if that's what you think. I knew you were about here somewhere. Hey, we're turning!"

Everybody seemed to realize it at the same time and everybody on our side ran over to the other side of the deck. Katie took my arm and said, "Don't look now, but isn't that someone we know up on the promenade deck?"

Whenever anyone says don't look now, I'm just like the next fellow, I look. And there, up on the next deck, was Elliott. He was smoking with a man-of-the-world air, and next to him was a girl with pale-olive skin and jet-black hair, tight to her head; the wind was whipping her long flowing dress round her slender body. You looked at her and you thought of harems, jewels and incense—things like that. At least I did.

Katie said, "There's a girl who won't call you chum, chum."

That girl was too much. I thought of our porch at home, and Amy dashing out with one of the boys from Rose Polytechnical, and Skipper playing Run Sheep Run on the street corner, and Elliott taking the family car for a date with that Ruth Whosis.

"Katie," I heard myself say, "you don't suppose we have made a mistake, do you?"

"Well," Katie said, "it's a long swim now."

CHAPTER 2

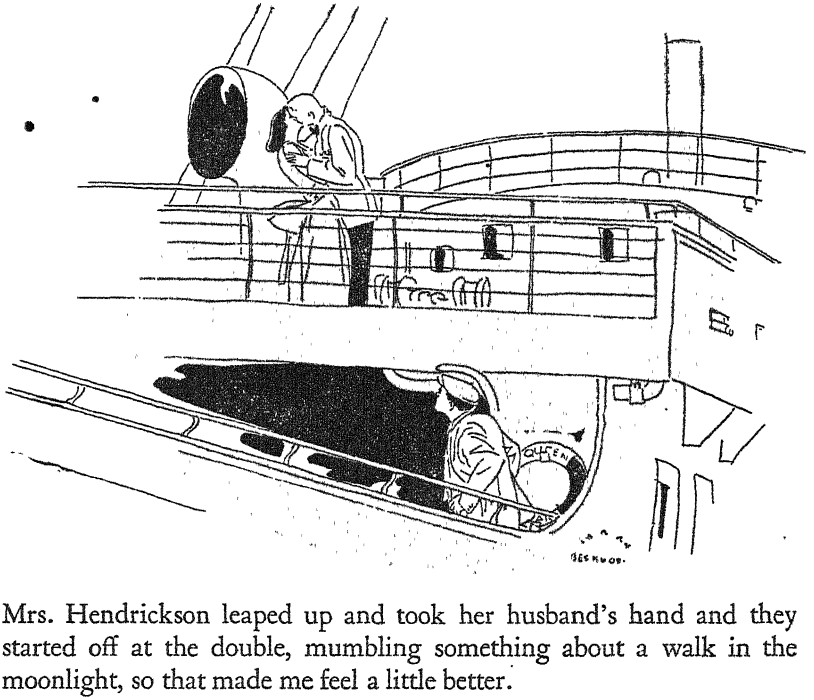
THAT NIGHT at dinner I saw that the eating arrangements I'd made hadn't worked out just exactly as I'd expected. I'd neglected to ask for a table for two, so we got a table for six, and that meant eating three meals a day with strangers. Their name was Hendrickson, all four of them, and they didn't stay strangers for long, because Mrs. Hendrickson was one of those women who talk just about all the time. She told us her whole life that night at the table, and let us know how kind it was of the senior Hendricksons to give the junior Hendricksons this trip for their honeymoon.

By about the fourth meal, it really hurt me the way Mrs. Hendrickson affected those two young people. They'd only been married for two days and you wished they'd found some little rustic cabin beside a lake somewhere and let the senior Hendricksons go gallivanting off by themselves. The girl was small, with dark eyes that kept getting brighter all through the trip, but not with joy; and the boy was nice-looking, with a crew cut but with one of those chins that just isn't there. Maybe that was the trouble. Anyway, at the end of every meal, Mrs. Hendrickson would announce the schedule for the rest of the day, the two kids would just look at each other once, and Mrs. Hendrickson would stand up like some kind of queen, and off they'd go, all four of them, to enjoy the honeymoon.

Katie's father had bought wine for us. So about the third evening I ordered it. Then I started to talk. Right through that dinner, I talked so fast that Mrs. Hendrickson couldn't have got a word in with a shoehorn. I told those people just about everything that ever happened to me, and a lot of things that had never happened to anybody. Pretty soon I saw young Mrs. Hendrickson glance over at her husband and I saw him begin to grin, and then I felt a kick under the table, which was young Mr. Hendrickson's foot searching for young Mrs. Hendrickson's. At the end of that meal I said, "Mr. Hendrickson, how about a game of bridge?"

Mr. Hendrickson said, "I'll take you on, Mr. Willard. Yessir. Mrs. Willard and I against you and my wife."

That was something I hadn't bargained for, but at once young



Mrs. Hendrickson leaped up and took her husband's hand and they started off at the double, mumbling something about a walk in the moonlight, so that made me feel a little better.

At first I thought that Mrs. Hendrickson was trying to get her revenge on me, but after a few hands of bridge I decided she simply didn't know how to play. She would bid anything just to make me be the dummy. I was dummy nine-tenths of the time and this gave me a chance to walk round, which I appreciated.

It was while I was dummy for about the hundredth time that I happened to stroll out on deck to look at the moon. I looked up and, on the deck above me, I saw two people kissing. I mean, they were *kissing*. This made me feel fine because I jumped to the conclusion that it was the young honeymooners.

Only it was my daughter Amy and O'Mara. They happened to look down and I knew they'd seen me, and then he dragged Amy back away from the railing.

Well, after the game was over I said to Katie, as we walked to our stateroom, "Katie, what have you told Amy about things?"

"What sort of things, darling?"

"You know what I'm talking about."

"Well, let's see. I've always answered every question honestly. Well," she hedged, "as honestly as I could, at any rate. Am I imagining it, or has the ship begun to rock?"

"What I'm trying to get at——" I began.

"I know what you're trying to get at, Harry. What have *you* discussed with Elliott? Did you see him tonight—still another girl? That viking he played ping-pong with all the afternoon. If you ask me, Elliott's in need of more instruction than Amy."

"You're not answering my question."

"Harry, Amy told me not three months ago that she'd never met a young man who stirred her in the slightest. You don't suppose we've been too strict with her, do you?"

"No, I do not!"

"Please don't bark like that. Darling, you're tired."

"Yep."

So we went to bed.

NEXT MORNING the ship had definitely begun to roll.

Skipper swooped down on the deck-chairs like a tropical monsoon as soon as I reached mine after leaving Katie in the cabin writing letters. "How do you like this!" he yelled at the top of his lungs. "Boy, is this a neat tub!" He swayed with his arms stretched out. "Feel the way she pitches? Makes you feel good inside, doesn't it?"

Skipper's swaying didn't make *me* feel good inside. I stood up and then wished I hadn't. I walked round the deck and kind of got hold of myself in front of a door that said *Library*. I ducked in, thinking maybe I'd find a mystery novel, and I was trying to find one without stooping when I saw Amy.

She was sitting bent over a table with what looked like the entire *Encyclopaedia Britannica* stacked round her; now and then she scribbled on a pad beside her. I eased round till I could see over her shoulder. On the page she was studying were the words ANCIENT ARCHITECTURE.

Easy, I told myself. Take it easy now. This is worse than you thought. I'd never known Amy to study a man's subject before.

She looked round then and she said, "Hi, Pop. What happened to you?" I sank down into a chair next to her. "You've got it, too. So has

Nick. He's been across so many times but he can hardly move this morning. Isn't that funny?"

"Hilarious." Then I decided that the worst thing I could do would be to start criticizing O'Mara, so I said, "He seems like a nice boy. I like him." That was a barefaced lie, but there are times in life when it's better to lie.

"You do?" Amy said. "Nick doesn't like you at all. Not you specifically, I mean. Just people *like* you. Dull, respectable people with families. He says—oh, let it ride."

"I'm kind of interested," I said.

"Well, he says people like you are either hypocrites, just pretending they're happy, or else they're deluding themselves. Say, you do look bad. Shouldn't you see the doctor?"

"I never felt better. I suppose you've never met anyone like Nick before, have you?"

"No. You have to know Nick to understand him."

"No, thanks," I said before I could catch myself.

Amy closed the book in front of her with a bang. "I knew you hated him. You don't understand, that's all. He's been pushed around ever since he was an infant. Schools in Paris and London and Switzerland. His father lives in New York, and gives him money and just pushes him off! And his mother—married three times!" Amy stood up. "Nick's a lonely boy, Pop. Even if you can't understand it, since we've all been so lucky. Sometimes Nick breaks my heart. I wish I'd never met him, and that's the truth!"

She ran out of the library. Now I've bungled it, I thought. She's probably tearing straight to his cabin now. I sat there for a long time, trying to make up my mind what to do, and that's when it came over me that I'd neglected my kids. First Elliott and now Amy had told me that I didn't understand, and I began to wonder if it might not be true. Now was the time, now when I had the leisure that I'd never really had before, to spend more time with them, get to understand them.

Somehow Elliott and I, we'd lost contact. I would find him and spend the rest of the day with him and as much time from then on as Elliott wanted to spend with me.

After another turn round the deck that almost turned the trick as far as my stomach was concerned, I found Elliott playing deck-tennis. His

opponent was the viking Katie had mentioned. She was all over the court, and Elliott didn't look happy. When he saw me he stopped dead and the viking's return hit him smack in the eye. But even that didn't seem to bother him. You never saw a boy so glad to see his old man. He just told the viking he'd see her later, family business, walked off and left her standing there on her bare legs. He hustled me off down the deck, breathing hard. "That gal," he said, "is just a mass of wires and motors inside. Boy, you came along just in the nick of time. I can't escape her."

"You could say no," I said.

"She doesn't know the meaning of the word. Come on, Pop, I'll change clothes. But we gotta get cracking, because she comes right down to the cabin and drags me out."

In the cabin Elliott started to change, in a big hurry, and I sat down and said, "Ell, how'd you like to send a cable to Ruth?"

"What's there to say in a cable?"

"Well, you could say you miss her."

"She's probably so annoyed with me for going off, she's playing pat-a-cake with Harold Shoemaker, just to show she doesn't care. Well, if that's the way she wants it, I can play pat-a-cake, too."

"Your mother thinks I should talk to you about that, Ell. You'll meet a lot of young women on this trip. And, uhh, well——"

"You've sure got me taped, Pop." He put on a sports shirt that practically screamed. "How do you like it?"

"We're not talking about clothes, Ell. Now, to handle yourself with these young women you're going to meet——"

"Pop, I'd like to talk to you, but I'm already late. You see, that little East Indian gal, Shamra, she takes a turn round the deck every day about this time. Good-bye, Pop."

So there I sat, just where I usually wound up when I tackled Elliott, about mid-way between frustration and relief.

THE LAST NIGHT, before dinner, Katie said: "Whether you know it or not, Harry, this trip has knocked five years off your age."

Katie was right: all of a sudden I was in the gayest, friskiest mood. "By the time I get home, I expect to be about twenty-two years old again, Katie," I said.

She reminded me of that while we were dancing later, just as Elliott danced by with his East Indian girl; he winked at me and did a fancy, slow turn round the edge of the floor. I'd have my talk with Elliott later, probably after we got home. As for Amy, she danced for a while, and then she and O'Mara disappeared out on the deck. She'll kiss him good-bye and that's that. Shipboard romance. Inevitable. Get it over with.

"You even dance better than usual," Katie said.

I danced her right off the floor then and we went out on deck. It wasn't a very good place for kissing, whatever the books say about a ship being a romantic place. There was always somebody strolling by, pretending not to look; and also, as Katie said, "They'll swear you're kissing somebody else's wife, Harry."

"I can't help it if they have that kind of mind on this ship," I told her.

Katie looked at me. She said, "Harry, I love you. I really do. I sometimes think it's a miracle, you and I. I honestly do."

CHAPTER 3

It was just before we landed at Southampton that Katie told me about Amy. Katie said she hoped she wasn't betraying a confidence but that she and I had this understanding that we'd tell each other everything about the children. Anyway, she said that Amy had confessed to her that she was glad the sea voyage was over because she wouldn't be seeing Nick O'Mara again. She had found out something about herself on that trip. Amy, Katie said, had discovered that she had a passionate nature.

"Do you mean this O'Mara character—what happened?"

"Oh, nothing happened, Harry. Amy wouldn't let anything happen and she doesn't think Nick really wanted anything to happen. She doesn't know what he does want."

"Well, I do. I think I'll have a little talk with this O'Mara kid." I started to stand up.

"Harry, sit down." She pulled me back. "That's the reason they're so quiet today, walking round and round the deck and not saying a word. It's kind of touching. Amy says the boy's so mixed up he doesn't know what he wants out of life. He doesn't believe in marriage. Says he's

seen too much of it with his mother. I feel sorry for the boy. So does Amy."

Well, anyway, I thought, this was the end of the line and this was the end of O'Mara.

THE BOAT TRAIN to London had a lot of little compartments, and we had one to ourselves. Outside the windows, little towns sailed by. It was the end of the day, men were coming home from work, women were cooking supper in the kitchens, and even if the houses did look different, with that old look that everything had—even so, life went on about the same here as anywhere. Times like that, you feel close to everybody, as if there aren't really any strangers, only millions and millions of people like yourself.

Amy was slumped down on the seat opposite me, staring out of the window. Looking at her made me feel sort of sad. On the dock, Katie had whispered that O'Mara's mother hadn't shown up to meet him, but that she'd had a car waiting for him to drive to London. Katie said, "Parents like that ought to be shot!" and I agreed; I'd happened to catch sight of O'Mara looking at us as we walked down the dock towards the boat train and his face had looked very young and forlorn. Still, it was a relief to think of the rest of the trip without worry about the boy and Amy.

It wasn't quite dark when I saw Amy come to life. She placed her forehead against the window, with her nose mashed to one side, so I looked out, too, and there, waiting for the train to pass, was a little open red car, and sitting on its bonnet was Nick O'Mara, waving a long piece of red silk back and forth.

"My scarf," Amy said. "He forgot to give back my scarf."

Well, that little car must have travelled like the wind because, every other crossing or so, there it'd be, with O'Mara waving that scarf. Pretty soon Amy was smiling, and I was cursing O'Mara to myself. But when I saw Amy happy again, I felt glad. That doesn't make sense, I know, but that's the way it was. I just plain wanted to see Amy smile, even if it meant we'd have to see O'Mara again.

I happened to glance at Katie then and she caught my eye and she reached over Skipper, who was sleeping with his head on her shoulder. She took my hand. *"C'est la vie,"* she said softly.

"What?"

"C'est la vie," she said again. "That's life, Harry."

When we reached our hotel in London, Amy found the flowers: an enormous bouquet with a note attached and her name on the envelope. It didn't take a mind reader to know who'd sent them.

I WON'T say we saw everything in London, but I will say we wore out five good pairs of legs trying. We saw Piccadilly Circus, and Westminster Abbey, and the Houses of Parliament, and Buckingham Palace. But what I got the biggest kick out of was looking at the people, and the shops, and all. You had to get used to the idea of how old everything was, let the idea of all those centuries sink inside you, and then you could get a thrill out of just strolling along. People weren't friendly the way they are in Terre Haute, but once in a while one of them would nod, friendly-like, and you'd feel right at home. Some of the men wore bowler hats and some even wore tweed suits although it was July, but I reckon that's a man's privilege, to dress any way he wants to; and that's what we've got in common with the British, freedom.

One morning we went to Madame Tussaud's, where they have those wax dummies of famous people in history and modern people, too, like Danny Kaye and Bob Hope. On the stairs there is this man wearing a guard's uniform, and Elliott, who was acting pretty bored with the whole thing, went up to him and asked where he'd find the chamber of horrors. The guard didn't answer because he was a dummy, too, with nice friendly blue eyes that stared straight back into yours. Well, I saw Elliott's face turn red. That held him for a while.

You had the feeling that all these wax figures were really living. There was Lincoln and Teddy Roosevelt and Truman and Ike, all looking right back at you as if maybe the next minute they'd speak up. There's this woman called Sleeping Beauty, and you'd swear she's breathing. After a while, it looks like they're all breathing.

So I wasn't really surprised to see someone I knew in there among the figures, standing still and quiet with his eyes open, the way they all did. I nudged Amy and she looked and let out a squeal. The figure came to life then and it was Nick O'Mara. He ran over and shushed Amy, who was mumbling that if the guards saw him they'd boot him out. Then he said to me, "I was in the lobby of your hotel this morning,

Mr. Willard. I heard you ask about this place, so I took a chance." After that he and Amy wandered round pretty much on their own.

"I thought Amy said she didn't want to see him again," I whispered to Katie.

"He had to return her scarf," Katie said.

After that, Nick was unofficially included in the sight-seeing for the day, and I'll say this for the boy: he knew his architecture. He could tell you who'd designed a church and who'd redesigned it and which part was old and which was new. He gave me a better idea of just what work and sweat and love went into those buildings—not like the buildings I was used to putting up, all in a rush, the most important thing not the beauty but the cost. It was a day well spent, letting Nick show us round. Although I can't say I felt any better about him—not when it came to Amy.

That night, when she was getting ready to go to the theatre with Nick, she said, "You still don't like him, do you, Pop?"

"I'm crazy about him. He's a great architect."

"He's not, you know. He may never be. He has knowledge and ideas, but what's it worth if he won't do anything about it?" She was pacing and she was furious. "He expects to start at the top! He could get a job in some architect's office and learn the practical side, but he says he doesn't feel like it. He's spoilt, and weak, and plain awful. He can't believe in anything or anybody! I wish I'd never met him!"

There wasn't much I could say to that; if I agreed, she'd climb down my throat; and if I didn't agree I'd be taking O'Mara's part. So I let her pace a while, talking.

"He asked me if I wanted him to get a job so he'd settle down and be just an anonymous nobody like everybody else. And I said as far as I was concerned, he might as well stop making all those handsome drawings and just live off his father and forget about being anything because he was too weak! And I told him that I didn't want to see him again, and here he is fifteen minutes late!"

"Slow down, Amy," I said. "Back up now, girl. You don't have to see him tonight, if you don't want to."

"That's the most terrible part of all. I do. I can't help it. He's gentle and considerate. And he's so alone." She kind of collapsed on to the bed, where she sat and looked up at me. "I guess my feeling about him

is just something I'll have to fight through by myself. And get over. Because that's what I intend to do, Pop—get over it!"

"If you want to start tonight——"

"But I can't do that. He has the tickets! Besides, I'm all dressed. Oh, don't worry, he won't even so much as hold my hand. He knows the rules now. I can't help the way he makes me feel when I'm with him, but I couldn't fall in love with a character like that! I'd be ashamed of myself!"

The phone rang. It was Nick. I told him Amy would be right down. And out she swept, tossing a kiss over her shoulder.

IT WAS a few nights later that Nick invited us to see his mother in the play she was in and then to go back-stage to meet her. Amy told me she was the toast of London, even if she was an American; and on the stage she looked like a girl to me, maybe twenty-two years old. Afterwards, we went back to her dressing-room, Katie and Amy and me; Elliott was "baby sitting" with Skipper back at the hotel. Nick knocked on the door and it opened and she just swooped down on us. She was wearing this *négligé,* all very elegant with gold in it, only it looked a little worn and splotched with make-up, and she hugged Nick and snatched our hands and held on, and all the while she was talking away, "Nick, my baby, you came, wasn't I hideous, one of my worst performances in this dreadful farce, and you've brought them, Mrs. Willard, precious, and Mr. Willard, so handsome and tall, isn't he the tallest thing, and this must be Amy, Amy, you're a raving beauty, you charmer, I've heard about you, come in, those dreadful people keep staring at us, close the door, dahling, dammit where are the drinks, do sit down, oh, what a nice, nice family, and so American, so down-to-earth, Nick, how did you do it, you dahling boy, wait till I wriggle out of this and dress, wasn't it a shameful performance, that Sir Richard mucked things up with that cannon-ball voice of his, a shambles, dammit now I've busted a strap!"

Miss Charlotte Hatfield, as Nick's mother was known, had removed her stage make-up and put on some other that looked just about as heavy, and she'd put on a dress, off in one corner with all those people pouring in. Pretty soon that little room was jammed with people, and Nick's mother, cocktail glass in hand, fixed her eyes on me. "Now tell

me, dahling, you're from Terre Haute, that's Illinois, isn't it, dahling, I'm in love with Amy, she's so genuine, so straightforward, I'll tell you what we'll do, we'll get supper, I've sent Amy and my dahling for a table at the Ivy, you'll love it there, enchanting, here, splash a little more in, you're a drinking man, I can tell by your beautiful eyes, if only I were going to Paris, now tell me where you're off to after Paris."

"We—ell," I said, "we're going to drive down to the Riviera. The A.A.A. made up a map——"

"Did they? I didn't know they did things like that, you mean they have members all over France?"

"I don't know about members," I said, "but——"

"I would have sworn you didn't have the problem, you look so healthy, dahling, but what about wine, you'll never make it through France, I'd better come with you, this is a horrible play, I'll get my barrister to break the contract, hey, listen everybody, I've made a decision, listen, will you, Mr. Willard has convinced me, I'm going to Paris!"

Nobody was paying any attention, so she reached over to the bar and picked up a tall glass and threw it on the floor. Everybody stopped yammering, and Miss Hatfield leaped up on a chair and started in again. "Dahlings, shush, please, I'm off to Paris, so please finish your drinks and go home, I love you all, go home now, dahlings, shoo, all of you, shoooo."

Everybody started edging to the door, so pretty soon we were standing in the street beside Charlotte's car, and by the time the fresh air hit me I knew I shouldn't have had that last drink. Nick's mother got in next to Katie, who said something about Harry not being able to drive a right-hand-drive car like this, in a big city. Well, sometimes my stubborn streak comes out. So I slid under the wheel. I had quite a time fiddling with the gear lever which came straight out of the dashboard, but finally I got it into gear and trod on the accelerator, and we started backing up, fast. Somebody screamed and Charlotte burst out, "This is going to be great sport, give it the gun, Harry!" I managed to get the thing in first gear, and we shot forward like a bat out of hell and automatically I swerved it over to the right side of the street, and a taxi turned the corner and came straight at us. Katie was yelling, "Harry!" and Charlotte was shouting, "Use your horn, Harry, you've got as good a horn as he has!" She reached past Katie and beat on the horn, and a funny little beep-beep


IVY
THE IVY

came out. But that taxi knew his rights and he kept coming. Then just at the last second I remembered and whipped back over to the left side.

I was sobering up pretty fast now, although not fast enough. Somebody said something about slowing down and I said I was going as slow as the car would go and I heard Katie yelling to stop and let her out, she'd walk. So I stamped around and found the brake and kicked it down to the floor and we all nearly went through the windscreen. A lot of horns started, and then came a high whistle. I started up again and the horns stopped, but that high thin whistle didn't. "Turn left here, Harry, left . . . I think the Ivy is down this street, but I must be wrong because this is a one-way street and aren't we going the wrong way?" Somehow I made another turn and then Charlotte yelled, "Stop!" I stopped but a fellow behind me didn't. When he hit us, we went sailing up over the kerb right in front of a restaurant.

I stepped out of the car to apologize, and about then that whistle that I'd kept hearing came closer and there, running down the street, was one of those London bobbies. He asked who—puff—owned that—puff—car, he'd been—puff—chasing for—puff—miles.

Nick and Amy came rushing from the restaurant and pushed through the crowd, and Nick's mother started murmuring to the bobby, who was busy writing down licence numbers and things, and while she was talking to him a man slipped up and lifted his camera and asked Miss Hatfield please to move in a little closer, and then he flashed a picture, and everybody in the crowd clapped and Nick's mother laughed and waved her hands, saying, "Shoo, please, the show's over, let's get inside, come, dahlings, I never had so much fun in my entire life, oh, Mr. Willard, I love you dearly, but I do see why you're going to have to let Alcoholics Anonymous help you through France, here's our table, now where's a drink?"

"Alcoholics Anonymous?" Katie said, blinking.

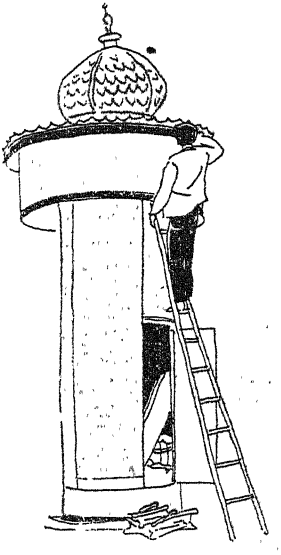
"Miss Hatfield," I said, "listen. A.A.A. means the Automobile Association of America."

"Waiter," Charlotte cried, "bring this man some milk, he's had enough, now he's trying to cover up, you shouldn't be so defensive, Mr. Willard, some of my best friends belong to your organization, here we are, bottoms up, dahlings, oh, Willards, I love you, we're going to have such a high old time together in Paris."

WELL, next morning—our last one in London—this picture came out in the paper, and underneath it said that the world-renowned actress, Miss Charlotte Hatfield, last night was involved in a slight motor-car accident. Pictured with her were her son, Nicholas O'Mara, and his fiancée, Miss Amelia Willard, of the United States. The way I put it to Katie was, if that picture'd come out in the Terre Haute papers we'd just naturally have to consider that Amy *was* engaged, but hardly anybody in Terre Haute reads the London papers. Katie just kept shaking her head every once in a while on our way from London to the airport.

CHAPTER 4

IT WAS fun looking down from the plane on the English countryside, all neat and in a pattern, with the fields and hedgerows and narrow little roads; but this would be a good chance, I had told myself, to study a few basic French phrases, so I started on that. I didn't get very far in the book, only to *Please: S'il vous plaît,* pronounced *Seel voo pleh,* and *Je ne comprends pas,* pronounced *Zhuh nuh kohn-prawng pah,* which means *I don't understand.* Then the stewardess came along and served lunch, with wine, and by the time she came back and took the tray the sign came on that said *Fasten seat belts.* All I could do was hope *Zhuh nuh kohn-prawng pah* would carry me through any situation that I might encounter during my visit to France.



"Harry, look! Children. Elliott, Amy, Skip—look now!" Katie's face was plastered against the window and she was straining at her seat belt. It did me good just to watch her face.

"There it is!" Amy said, from across the aisle, and then Skipper and Elliott unfastened their belts and charged over to her side of the plane and gawked out of the window, and there was a faint moisture round Katie's eyes while the plane kept getting lower and lower over the roof-tops of Paris. Way off in the distance I got one quick little glimpse of the Eiffel Tower.

Going through customs, I couldn't understand a single word anyone said to me, and those Frenchmen, they get mighty excited over the slightest little thing. Our porter kept asking me some question again and again, and I tried to explain, in English, that we'd like to go to the waiting-room because my wife's sister was going to meet us there. I stood there bobbing my head and shrugging my shoulders and waving my arms about and pointing and Katie said, "Harry, you look exactly like a Frenchman, if only you were speaking French."

And then there was her sister, Elsie, waving and yelling *yoo-hoo* and *allô* She grabbed Katie and Katie grabbed her and there was a hulla-baloo of hugging and kissing and laughing and crying, and our porter shrugged his shoulders and said something which I took to mean, "Emotional people, these Americans." Anyway, the French people round us all laughed and nodded.

I remembered Elsie as a harum-scarum kid, with her hair flying; but this Elsie was dressed the way women dress in magazines, neat and trim and slender, and she spoke to the porter in fast French. We all got into her little car, and Elsie drove us to our hotel.

Even my ride through London the night before hadn't prepared me for Paris. Elsie started down that street at fifty miles an hour and plunged into spaces that didn't even exist until we were through them. After London, where everybody seems to have some slight regard for human life, Paris is a jungle. If you've ever wondered about all those changes the French are always making in their governments, you'd come to understand them in just a short drive through Paris. It sure explains what anarchy means. In front of the hotel, Elsie edged into a parking place that really wasn't there and, as we went inside, Katie whispered, "Harry, you've met Elsie before. Are you sure this is Elsie?"

Well, it seems this was not Elsie. Her name was now Elise. She'd always detested her name, it sounded so cowlike, she told us as we went up to our floor in the hotel's old-fashioned open-grilled lift. When we reached our rooms, high above the roof-tops of Paris, she said a friend of hers was dropping in to meet us. He was a novelist, and his first book had just come out in America and the reviews were calling him the new F. Scott Fitzgerald, wasn't it marvellous? He lived in Paris; he couldn't bear to return to the States, because he found the atmosphere over there destructive to his talent. While she went on about him, Katie looked

across at me and nodded as if to say her sister was in love, wasn't it wonderful?

Well, when this Arthur Pope came in he just happened to be the kind of man who sets my teeth on edge. He was big and smooth and just a little too pleased to meet us. His grip was a little too tight and his smile was a little too bright; and he had a habit of smoothing his moustache, first one side and then the other. His reviews had just arrived by air mail, he said, and Elise insisted we all have a look. The book was about people living in Europe because the life there was free. One reviewer said, "His first novel is destined for popular success in the homeland he has spurned." Pretty soon Pope shook hands all round again, and went out, saying he'd see Elise later.

After he left, there was a lot of palaver between the girls about Katie's parents and how disappointed they were that Elise didn't write more often; and then Elise got a hard look round her lips and said she wrote as often as she had time. I signalled to Katie to lay off. After all, Elise's life was none of Katie's business and we hadn't come to Paris on a mission.

Katie said, after her sister'd gone, "I don't think she's happy. The poor child." Then she asked whether I'd noticed the hungry look Elise got in her eyes when she looked at Skipper and the other kids and I said Elise did look hungry, but only as though she didn't eat enough because she was worried about her figure; which, I said, wasn't much compared to Katie's because Katie looked as though she'd lived, not as though she was posing for a magazine. This put Katie in a better frame of mind.

When we went downstairs, nobody had to ask where we were going because there was only one place to go our first afternoon in Paris. But riding up in that little open-grilled lift in the Tower gives you the sense of height and uncertainty even before you start to move, and Katie said she didn't want to spoil anyone's fun, but she thought she'd get off at the first landing if we didn't mind. So I stepped out with her. That black steel did look a mite fragile and you could feel a kind of sway, even here. Anyway it was good to be alone with Katie for a while.

Then I happened to glance up and my heart seemed to jump out of my chest. Elliott, with that camera at his eye, was perched way up on top of us, kind of hanging out from the black steel, holding on by his legs! In the movie Elliott was taking, I look as if I just about went

crazy. I started waving my arms and yelling for him to get back, but Elliott just kept leaning farther out to get a better shot. And then he started pointing down below and I saw that little red sports car down in the street, and a figure striding from the car to the entrance of the Tower; in the sun Nick's red hair glowed like a beacon.

Elliott must have told Amy because there was one helluva mix-up then, with Nick coming up and Amy going down to meet him. Pretty soon they burst out of the lift on our landing. Amy was angry, and Nick looked tired, with circles under his eyes. He needed a shave. I asked him if he had had a pleasant trip and he said no, he'd driven all night, come across on the ferry and when he got to Paris he knew we'd probably be here, so he tore down here without even getting a shave, and now she wouldn't even speak to him! I asked if he'd seen the morning paper, and he said he'd left London before it was on the street. I showed him the clipping I had in my pocket. His eyes popped and he took Amy's shoulder and turned her to him and said he didn't know anything about this, he was sorry, it was all his mother's fault.

"I'll make them print a retraction! Anyway, why are you so sore at me, Amy? You and I know that we're not going to be married!"

Then Amy looked at him, with her eyes narrowing, and said, quietly, "That's right. You don't believe in marriage, do you?"



With that she turned and pushed into the lift just as the gate was closing and Nick went tearing after her and forced the gate open while the French guard started yelling, and then they disappeared, going down.

"You don't suppose Amy imagines she's in love with that pip-squeak, do you?" I said to Katie.

"Well," Katie said, "all I wish is that Nick had never told her he didn't believe in marriage. You know how Amy's always been about anything she couldn't have."

And right then and there, I got an idea

that Katie called brilliant. We decided that what we'd do would be to let Amy see just as much of Nick and his mother as possible; we'd even throw them together. Then it wouldn't take Amy long to realize that she couldn't risk marrying a kid with Nick's crazy background and, as Katie said, she'd go back home with a bitter-sweet memory but no real regrets.

So we were feeling pretty good by the time Skipper and Elliott came down. Elliott said he had the whole thing on film, and it was pretty dramatic, too. He said he'd about decided that he ought to be a big-shot director in Hollywood.

"Well, Ell," I said, "you try any more of that dare-devil trick stuff and you'll be a splotch on a Paris pavement," and then Skipper said *he'd* like to have a picture of *that.*

THAT NIGHT we met our first Frenchman. What I mean to say is, we met the first Frenchman we could talk with, because he spoke English. We were going out to dinner with Elise and we expected she'd have that writer fellow, Pope, with her, but instead the man was named Jacques Sarignac. He had a shock of dark hair and brown eyes that sort of snapped at you, and I liked him right away because when he said he was "charmed" to meet us, he said it in a way that didn't make a man's hackles rise. He sounded as though he meant it. Jacques drove us through the Bois de Boulogne, and we ate outside in a fancy place right smack in the middle of the park. Right away Elliott and Elise got involved in a conversation about American movies. Elise wanted to know, did all the young people in America carry flick-knives and were most of them organized in gangs and did they all hate their parents the way the films made it seem? And Elliott said none of the kids he knew were like that, but he supposed since the movies showed this it might be true in other parts of the country.

Then Skipper wanted to know whether you could get into the sewers because he'd seen a movie where a policeman kept trailing the hero all through the sewers of Paris. Jacques said but of course, it would be his pleasure to take Skipper if Skipper's *maman* would give permission. I noticed Katie'd been studying Jacques pretty hard, and when she said, "If Skipper will promise to mind you, yes," I knew she'd taken to him. Well, everything seemed to be sailing along, so I proposed a toast. I

lifted my glass and I said, "To Aunt Elise, also known as Elsie, and to her children when that time comes."

Katie looked at me in an odd sort of way, and Elise looked startled, and she blushed. Then Jacques lifted his glass and drained it as much as to say, *"I'll drink to that!"* Elise made some remark in French and refused to drink, and Jacques laughed, kind of short-like, and he made some remark. The rest of us just sat there while Jacques and Elise carried on this private feud in French. It went on like that all the way back to the hotel.

When we got there Jacques shook hands and said good night and, with a tiny last look at Elise, who was glaring, strolled out of the lobby. Then Katie asked me to take the kids up to the room; she and Elise would sit in the lobby a while, she said. When she came into our room she was crying.

"Hey," I said. "Hey, our first night in Paris. What's going on?"

"She's not happy, Harry. Oh Harry, she's such a child. She wants to be free. Freedom's more important to Elsie than anything in the world. Jacques wants Elsie to marry him and have children and all that, but Elsie won't. As I said, it's a sort of principle with her."

"Nuts!"

"Harry, if only you wouldn't get so excited——"

"I always get excited when you cry! I didn't come to Paris to see you cry!"

"I've stopped crying, Harry. Let's get to bed."

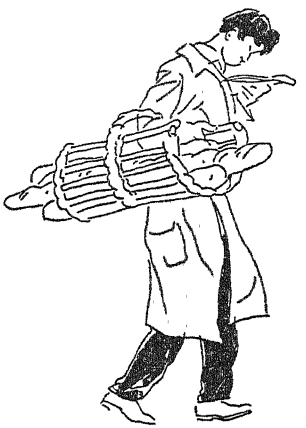
So we got into bed and Katie told me everything Elise had told her—how Jacques was just too conventional and *bourgeois,* coming from a farm in the north of France, still a small-town type even if he was successful in the motor-car business in Paris. Katie said Elise had made up her mind to tell Jacques her decision tomorrow when they took Skipper down to the sewers. Then Katie said, "It's sad, isn't it, when you think about the dreams you have as a child and what they turn into."

Well, that was an innocent enough remark, but it set me wondering, thinking about Katie and her sister back there in Connecticut as girls, dreaming about the men they were going to marry and the kind of life they were going to have. Back home whenever I'd hint that maybe Katie had some regrets, she'd laugh at what she called my "inferiority complex" and say that she wouldn't trade our house for a castle in Spain.

Only I guess I couldn't help wondering there, just for a second, whether Katie, if she had a choice, would change places with her sister.

OUR REAL sight-seeing began next day. Elise picked up Skipper; and the rest of us, with Nick, went to Notre-Dame Cathedral.

Nick knew more about that Cathedral than any guide you'd ever hire. He explained how it was begun in the twelfth century, and how it took five whole generations to build, with people devoting their entire lifetimes to it, and about the Cathedral's twenty-two chapels, and how the Gothic arch works, with no steel framing, just stones on stones making a perfect arch that seems to go way to nowhere and kind of takes your breath away. Listening to Nick, you could see all those years and all that labour and it made you wonder about those people who did the building. It made a man feel humble and little, yet proud at the same time. While Nick talked, Amy took his arm and she looked up into his face, as if she was realizing how little she really did know him.



Then we left Amy and Nick, and outside the Cathedral Katie bought some of those ugly little miniature gargoyles that, Nick had explained, were exact reproductions of the ones up on the Cathedral, which the people in the Middle Ages believed frightened evil spirits away from their church. After that, we saw the little chapel that the kings of France had used, Sainte Chapelle, with its stained-glass windows, with colours that you can't describe and that no photograph ever captures. And we went to the Conciergerie, a dungeon-like place, where Marie Antoinette had been kept during the Revolution, in a little cell with a door so low she'd have to stoop down to get in and out, so she'd feel less like a queen. Then we took a cab up to the Sacré-Coeur Church, on top of a hill; from there you can see the city of Paris better than any other way, I guess.

I went outside to take some pictures, shooting down along the high steps to the little narrow street below, with shops and pavement cafés, and waiters standing there chatting; and *voilà!* there was Amy coming

up the steps, with Nick stepping fast to keep up with her. Suddenly he grabbed her, not very gently either, and kissed her. Amy kind of struggled, and then she was kissing him hard, reckless and kind of wild. In a minute or two, she came walking by, as fast as before, her face flushed and her eyes bright and angry, and went inside the church. Nick came up to me and leaned against the stone railing and looked me in the eye and said, "Is your daughter crazy?"

"It's possible," I said.

"Back where you come from, does a girl have to be engaged before she'll let a boy kiss her?"

"Nope," I said. "I reckon there's just about as much kissing goes on in Terre Haute as in Paris."

"She likes me to kiss her. I can tell that. But she won't let me. Amy's put a price tag on herself. A pretty high price, too. Marriage."

"Young fellow," I said, "you start that sort of talk and I'm going to kick you all the way down those steps."

"Listen, Mr. Willard. I'm not interested in marrying anybody. I don't believe in marriage. It starts off fine, but after a while the people stop loving and then they find somebody else and get a divorce and start all over again. It's a trap."

"You don't think there's anything in it for you?"

"No, sir. I happen to look a little more deeply than most people. And I make up my own mind. If your daughter thinks she's going to change it——"

"She doesn't want to change it, dammit!"

"If she thinks she's going to change it by playing hard to get and if you came abroad to get a husband for——"

"The last thing in the world I want is——"

"Count me out! I only started talking to you because I thought you might be able to explain Amy, but I should have known you don't know the first thing about anybody in your family because that's the safest way to be—deaf and dumb and blind. That way people like you can pretend you love them all, because it's a nice safe habit. And it gives you that phoney feeling of importance to think they all love you back, but the truth of the matter is none of you people know the first damn thing about love! None of you!"

Then he whipped round and he went stumbling down those steep

steps and disappeared. I had the impression that he was about to burst into tears, like a little boy. That's the reason that I wasn't angry: I reckoned this kid was about as hungry for love as any human being I'd ever seen.

I followed him down the steps and there he was, having a drink at one of the little tables that were all round. I went over and sat down, feeling as helpless as if he was one of my own kids. He was drinking a brandy, called a *fine,* pronounced *feen*. So I had one, too, and we sat there, not talking. After that, we walked back up those steps and found Katie and Amy. Amy looked at the two of us as if she didn't know which one she hated more, and we all drove back to the hotel in a taxi.

When we got to the hotel Skipper and Elise told us what had happened to him that day in the Paris sewers. A guard took them in a group of tourists down under the streets, where it's like a big cave with a lot of tunnels going off at the sides, and he warned them, in French, that everyone had to stay with the group. Elise said she made a point of translating this warning for Skipper, but Skipper said he didn't remember it.

Anyway, Skipper claimed that he had to go to the lavatory and he decided he'd slip down a side sewer, knowing he could always get back to the group because they had torches. Well, that's what he did and pretty soon Elise asked Jacques if Skipper seemed to be enjoying himself —and Jacques said the child was with her, and she said he was not with her, and the guide asked if there was anything wrong, and Elise said there was a boy lost, and then she started yelling Skipper, Skipper, and pretty soon the guard was yelling Skeeper, Skeeper, and everyone was flashing torches about. Skipper said he could hear them calling, but when he went towards the voices they started coming from behind him and he started in that direction, only then they were coming round a corner. He started yelling and Elise heard him, so she cried, *Attention!* and then everybody in the group decided the voice came from a different direction and little torch-lights appeared in all directions with the guard screaming for them all to stand perfectly still.

"Uncle Jacques rescued me," Skipper said. "I was crying." Elise said he wasn't crying nearly so much as she was. So in all the excitement she never did talk to Jacques about her decision that day.

Katie said, "We must thank Jacques. Where is he?"

Elise said he was still in the sewers, helping the guards find all those



other people who'd gone off to look for Skipper. And she said, "It was the most amusing thing. Everyone thought Skipper was ours. Imagine! Oh, Skip, don't forget, we're going on that cruise on the river tomorrow. *Au revoir.*"

After she had gone, Skipper said, 'She's not as bad as she seemed at first. I mean, I like her. She told one old dame that I was her son, hers and Jacques's!"

THE NEXT few days, by some miracle, passed without any incident; we spent them like any other tourists in Paris. It was Elliott who said, "I bet this would be some place without all the tourists." And he said *tourists* in that same way that everybody I know who has ever been to Europe says the word, as though it meant criminals or something. There was hardly a tourist anywhere who didn't think there were too many tourists in Europe that summer.

Every morning Katie went shopping; she'd stagger back to the hotel loaded down with presents for people back home. The cupboards started to bulge, and the packets of traveller's cheques to un-bulge.

One night we went to this theatre famous for its horror plays. It's called the Grand-Guignol, and it's just a little bit of a place, stuck off down an alleyway, and inside it looks as though it might once have been a stable.

The programme said the play that night was supposed to be set in a small town in America, so that sounded interesting and we settled back and pretty soon the lights went out, and some weird music started, and there stood a big Negro, in a sort of eerie greenish light. Then the stage lights went on and we were looking at a little country jail, like the ones they used to have round Terre Haute when I was a kid. A couple of men dressed like deputy sheriffs came stamping on, one of them eating a chicken leg and the other one chewing tobacco. For a few minutes there I felt a little homesick. But then all hell broke loose. There was a siren, and a couple of other men grabbed the Negro and threw him

down on the floor and three of them held him while the fourth one stamped on his arm. Well, I'm not going to go into all they did to that poor coloured man, but it was pretty bad. The fact is, it was so bad you didn't want to sit and watch. Then they brought in a sexy-looking girl and she took one look at this coloured man and started to wail, and then she turned round and spat in the face of the deputy, and he hauled off and landed one right on her mouth and she crumpled down on the floor. Then there was some more weird music, and with that the curtain came down and that was the end of the first act.

Elliott allowed as how it was an unusual play, and I said if this was a Frenchman's idea of life in America, no wonder the world was in the mess it was in. The second act was worse. This time it was the woman who was beaten up. They were trying to make her tell them something, so they whipped the clothes practically off her back. They must have got all their ideas about America from the covers of those twenty-five-cent paperback books in the drug-stores back home. I could tell Katie was getting pretty fed up.

"Well," I said, "I don't care how it ends," so we left and I don't know to this day how that play came out.

One afternoon, Nick and our kids went to Fontainebleau, and Katie went with Elise to Elise's hairdresser, so I was all alone. I decided to take a walk, and after strolling a while I sat down in one of those cafés and had a *fine*. A girl at the next table kept smiling at me in a sort of inviting way, until I had to get up and go out. Then she followed me a block or so down the street. Going into the hotel, I took a look at myself in the plate glass, trying to figure out what a young kid like that could see in me, but not feeling unhappy that it'd happened, if you want to know the truth.

I hadn't been in the room more than half an hour when Katie came in. She crossed to the mirror and took off her hat, and I could almost feel my chin hit my Adam's apple. She saw my face and whirled round. "You don't like it!" she cried.

I couldn't speak. I just stared. She kept pushing at her hair, what was left of it. It was short and swirled round her head, with a few wisps on her forehead; she just didn't look like Katie any more.

"It's the latest thing," she said, in a sort of little voice. "It's what they call an Italian cut. Elise said it would change my whole personality."

I gurgled something.

"It'll grow out. My hair grows fast, Harry." She slumped into a chair. "You don't like it."

"Sure, I do," I lied. "It's . . . cute. It's a crew cut, that's what it is. If it's what you want, Katie——"

"I do think it's attractive. And different. I honestly do."

I said it was different, all right, and she said there was nothing made her angrier than having me agree with her when I didn't mean it, I said it looked very Italian and movie-starrish and she was a knock-out and a lulu, and then she really did blow her top. She said I must be seething to say those things.

Well, it went on like that through the next day. I don't know why that damned haircut affected me the way it did. I reckon I'm a conservative and don't like to see things change. Also, I didn't care for the way those Frenchmen began to eye Katie in the street.

Then, the following afternoon, Nick's mother hit Paris like a tornado. "I rang you up first thing, dahlings, because you must come over to tea, at once, I won't take no for an answer, I'm at the George V, just round the corner, shall we say fifteen minutes, your lovely daughter, she's sitting right here, a picture, fifteen minutes, not a second longer, toodle-oo dahlings."

Well, it turned out that when Charlotte said tea, she meant tea—at least for me. When we came in, she planted a kiss smack on my cheek, saying, "You don't mind watching others drink, do you, you're exactly as I remembered you, so *distingué,* and dahling Katie, how Paree does agree with you, you're blossoming, you've turned back the clock, you were divine to come, we'll just whisper what we'll have to drink, what would you like, dahling?"

Katie looked at me, her eyes just flickering at the teapot in front of me, and said, "May I have a double martini?"

In a way I was glad. I've always said Katie should try more than one drink some time, and I was curious to see what would happen. Every time I reached for a glass instead of a teacup, Charlotte would shake her head and beg me not to, because, she said, she didn't want me to have a relapse like that night in London. There was no use trying to explain that the A.A.A. was not the same as A.A. because she just wouldn't listen.

". . . horrible trip, horrible, bumpety-bump all the way, I think they stole the plane from the Wright Brothers or someone, but we're all here, now dahlings I must ask you both a great favour, please, just a trifle more for me, Nick, I need Dutch courage, to Le Corbusier, dear old Le Corbusier, what a divine architect, you've heard of him dahlings, Nicholas adores him, Nicholas and I want to show your daughter the last word in modern architecture, it's a church at Ronchamp, Nicholas wants your Amy to share his enthusiasm and I'm to be chaperon, I'm very strict, for if there's anything I loathe it's loose living so you may depend on me, dahlings, say it's agreeable, put poor Nicholas out of his misery!"

Nick sat listening, with his face set and his eyes hard. He said, "Here are some pictures if you want to see them."

The pictures showed a white structure that looked like a cross between a barn and a ship. There was a big white pillar-like thing that looked like a silo, and a roof that kind of swooped up at one end to a point, just like a prow of a ship. Nick said it was built of concrete and allowed the architect to create a building without any straight or parallel lines, like sculpture. It was a revolutionary idea, yet the townspeople and the priests were pleased, and now people from all over the world went to see it. You could tell from the little throb in Nick's voice that this meant something to him that maybe I couldn't understand but that I had to respect.

"Dahlings, it's no distance at all, whist, you'll hardly know we're gone, we leave the first crack of day, about eleven o'clock, you can't refuse him, it's too close to Nick's heart, you can't."

Katie said, "How long is whist-you'll-hardly-know-we're-gone?" Then she helped herself to another martini.

"If we left before eleven, we'd be back the following evening."

Katie swallowed, and then she said, "It seems a long church to go to see a way."

Amy's eyes popped at that, and Katie blinked in my direction as if to ask what everyone was staring at.

"Then it's settled!" Charlotte cried and swooped over and gave me a kiss on the cheek again, saying what a good boy I was to sit there while everyone else was drinking, it showed immense will-power. "I'll get the hotel to pack a picnic lunch, cold breast of guinea

hen, oh, I'm so happy to be able to do this for you, my dahling Nicholas!"

Amy stood up. "Now that it's all settled, did it ever occur to anyone to ask me?" And she stalked out of the room with her head in the air and slammed the door.

Nick took a step after her, then stopped and looked at me, as though I'd slammed the door in his face. "What'd she do that for?" Then to his mother, "You didn't give me a chance to ask her!" Then to Katie, "Mrs. Willard, if Amy had half your good manners and poise, I wouldn't be on the verge of insanity!"



He went out then, fast, and Katie said, "He didn't thank for me to wait him."

Charlotte Hatfield started in again. "Did you ever see it to fail, I always get the blame, the mantle of guilt always falls on these shoulders, dahlings, sit here and cheer me, I get lonely this time of evening, don't fret about the children, all lovers quarrel, don't you agree, Mrs. Willard?"

"Harry and I ever quarrel," Katie said. "I mean *never.*" And she stood up and walked to the door. "We're past all that. Harry and I are getting too old."

Well, I had to bite my tongue then. I took Katie's arm and turned her in the right direction as we came out of the Hotel George V. She said, "Maybe you could get a crew cut, Harry."

That did it. "What do you mean, old? What made you say that?"

"I hate the taste of martinis. Why did you let me drink that jelly glassful?"

I was sore. "You behave as though you really want a fight."

"I do hope it was a good tea, Harry. Considering the way you detest tea."

CHAPTER 5

One of those travel books had said that we couldn't leave Paris without having dinner at the Reine Pédauque, so that night that's what Katie and I did. The headwaiter sat us down at a table with about eighteen glasses on it, all shapes and sizes, and then another waiter, with a bunch of grapes embroidered on his waistcoat, set up one of the glasses and poured some wine into it. Katie said that the wine came with the meal for the same price, a different wine for every course. I decided we'd made a mistake, because Katie'd already had those martinis, but I didn't want to say anything and have her call me old again, or worse, so I tasted my wine and it was great. Then about three waiters started bringing the food, course after course, and every time you looked up there was a fresh glass of wine, usually some other colour from the last glass.

Funny thing about that wine: it didn't clap you on the back the way whisky sometimes will; it kind of climbed up in you and gave you a hug and made you feel warm, with a glow. We were both glowing so much that we had to skip dessert. Katie explained to the waiter that she had to watch her weight, and the waiter got very grave and said this was against nature, that madame, of all people, had no reason to watch her weight, her weight was superb, as m'sieur would verify, would I not? I said her weight suited me fine and the waiter nodded and then, when we were standing up to go and handing out the tips, he said, "May I wish madame and m'sieur a most happy honeymoon in Paris?"

When we were out in the street, Katie burst out laughing; she leaned against the building and laughed in great whoops.

"Look," I said, "it's the same line he uses with all Americans."

"Harry, that's not the truth. He thought we were on our honeymoon and that's what we are, whether you like it or not!"

Then she started to walk, and I said did she want to take a taxi and she said no, why take a taxi when you can swim?

I said, "I'm floating."

Then Katie said, "Come on, I'll beat you to the corner, Harry. I wasn't in the swimming team at Smith for nothing!" and she started to run. By the time I started to run after her, she was way down there, with



her hat in one hand and her skirt up over her knees, and she *ran*. It looked as if I was chasing her, and that's the idea some people got, because they started a hullabaloo on the corner and by the time I got there, there was this gendarme coming out of nowhere. He stood with his fists on his hips, looking at me as I puffed up to the corner. There was Katie with a crowd round her, all jabbering away, and when the gendarme started talking to me, I didn't have to understand French to know what he was asking. I tried showing him my wedding ring, which made him shake his head as if that didn't make my behaviour any better. Then Katie moved in between us and she stood on her tiptoes and kissed me; then she stepped back, smiling, and took my arm. At that the crowd of people smiled and the gendarme shrugged. A woman's voice said, *"Jeu d'amour américain"* and at that everybody got a big laugh, except me. So we got into a taxi and Katie kissed me again. "Hey," I said.

"I love you, Harry," she said, clinging to me. "We haven't said that for a long time, have we? I love you, love you, love you!"

We were almost to the hotel when the cab came to a dead stop; the street was blocked off and behind the barricade a group of people were watching something in the centre of the street. A gendarme motioned



for the cab driver to back up and the driver muttered something about the Bastille.

Katie said, "Harry, they're dancing in the street; tomorrow's Bastille Day! Listen to the music! Let's dance. Tip the man, come on, darling."

We edged our way through the crowd and watched for a minute or two. The band was playing "Night and Day." There were all sorts of people dancing—kids and young lovers and tourists and old women and dignified middle-aged men and sailors in white uniforms with their red pompons bouncing, and everybody seemed to be having a fine time, so we started dancing, too. The music got faster with the next tune and I tried a few little steps that I just made up, and Katie went swinging right along, so I made up a few more. I enjoyed dancing like that; it wasn't a bit like those dances at the country club back home. In Paris that night there were banners streaming up above in the wind and a lot of voices laughing and the band wasn't anything to write home about but it was gay.

Between numbers, one of those sailors came up and made a little bow at Katie, and when the music started, he grabbed her and whirled her away, with her smiling at me over his shoulder. Then an elderly woman,

wearing a shawl over her head, made a little bow to me, so I had a dance with her. She could dance, too. She was a gay little woman with crackling black eyes that still had the devil in them and the only words of English she knew were, "Is it not a pretty moon?" Whenever she said it, she looked up at the sky, where there wasn't even the suggestion of a moon, and then she'd chuckle: she knew it was a joke.

Then I happened to spot Katie and she was jitterbugging. She looked kind of startled at first, but then she began to follow the sailor's feet and, by golly, if she didn't jitterbug better'n anyone I ever saw. Her eyes were bright and her short hair was flying about and she looked like a kid. After that, an elderly gentleman in a Homburg hat made a bow in front of her and they danced, stiff and dignified, and I started twirling round with a girl about fifteen years old who had a sort of fixed happy smile on her face, as if she didn't know who she was dancing with but she was pleased with the world.

I was with Katie again, and all of a sudden it came over me how lucky we were, how alive we were, with all that life beating round us. Everything that came before was only a sort of preparation for this, Katie and me holding each other in the middle of the street in Paris. Then I realized that Paris really had little or nothing to do with it. What it was, was life with a capital L, and we were realizing it, not just slipping along from day to day, with habit taking the edge off the things we felt; no sir, we were living it and knowing it, right up to the hilt. I knew it couldn't always be like that, not only because of the habits that we'd just naturally fall back into once we were home, but because we were getting older and time was rushing by. It wasn't a bad feeling, though, because it made that night more precious somehow.

Katie must have been reading my thoughts because she said, "I didn't mean what I said about our getting old, Harry. I don't feel a bit old tonight."

I ran my hand through her hair, which was soft and beautiful, and I said, "I like it, Katie. I really like it."

She didn't answer, only put her forehead against my chest and we danced till the music ended.

WHEN Amy came back from her jaunt with Nick and his mother, she was very subdued, and she didn't volunteer any information, just

answered Katie's questions. Yes, she'd had a good time, and yes, Nick and his mother were just fine. Then she went into the bathroom to have a shower. It didn't take second sight to see something had happened to Amy.

About noon the next day, Amy ran into me in the lobby and said, "Pop, can we eat together? I'm famished."

We found a small café, and right away Amy started talking about everything under the sun. I began to think while we chatted away, how strange it was—Amy was almost a woman and yet how many times had she and I, just the two of us, sat down and had lunch together, or a cup of coffee, or anything? Why didn't I think some time to invite her to meet me down-town in Terre Haute for lunch? Here she was a woman with maybe a serious problem, and did it take *that* to make us sit down together and talk?

Finally Amy said, "It was lovely, Pop. That chapel. It has a feeling. You should see Nick's drawings of it. He climbed up on the hill and made some sketches that really catch it. They make it all clear, what the architect was after." Then suddenly she said, "Pop, do we have to hang about Paris three more days? Couldn't we just pack up this afternoon and get in the car you've hired and head south? Couldn't we?"

Well, I explained, Elise was having a party this afternoon for that writer fellow, Arthur Pope, and she would be pretty disappointed if we didn't show up, and Katie had some plans, too.

"Never mind. Skip it," she said.

"Look, Amy——"

So then she told me about Nick. She told me how it came to her, up on the hill with him, that he was hopeless. "Really hopeless, Pop."

So it was over, just the way Katie and I'd hoped it would be. It was just like a load lifting. But at the same time I didn't like that look in Amy's eyes. "Why?" I asked, finally.

"Because he's a spoilt mixed-up child." She smiled then, probably because of the way I looked, and reached across the table and took my hand. "I'm mixed up, too, Pop."

"I think you've got it all worked out pretty well."

"Well, it's not simple. On Bastille night in the village they had dancing in the square, and I danced with every male in town, even the mayor. And do you want to know what Nick did? He found a French girl and

took her off by himself. When they came back he was furious. And so was she. And then he dragged me away from the crowd. As soon as he let go of me I smacked him, Pop, and then he got hold of my arms and tried to explain how I was ruining every other girl in the world for him. He went tramping off through the hills then. And I never wanted anything so much in my life as to go after him. Sometimes I wish I had." She stopped and lit a cigarette. Then she gave me a flimsy smile and said, "I'm sorry I made you listen to all this."

"Amy," I said, "I can get the car directly after lunch. We can be in the château country tomorrow."

Amy shook her head. "I guess it wouldn't work, Pop. I can't run off and leave it dangling."

It was a woman talking, not Amy, not this child. Walking back to the hotel, she finished her story. The morning she and Nick and his mother were to leave the village, they were having breakfast on the outdoor terrace of their little inn, and Nick started talking about what he might do—which was, go back to New York, after all, take one of the three jobs he had been offered and see what he could do with it.

"Then his mother kissed him and gushed and cooed. But no sooner did she say how marvellous she thought his scheme was than he lost interest. Nick resents his mother so much, he'll do anything to cross her. Anything. Now he thinks he might drive down to the Riviera to her villa. He says he feels like swimming in the Mediterranean."

"Good Lord," I said.

Amy laughed, a short little laugh. "Thanks for listening, Pop. It's good talking to you. We ought to do it more often."

And we went into the hotel. . . .

I DIDN'T want to go to the cocktail party in the first place. Even getting ready was something in itself. Katie allowed herself about two hours and studied herself in the mirror and changed her clothes twice before she was satisfied, and she said she wished I'd stop pacing up and down while she brushed her hair because I made her nervous. So I wasn't in exactly a party mood when we reached Elise's apartment, which was the whole second floor of a pink stucco house in Neuilly. As Katie and I walked up the drive, she said, "Now, Harry, try to relax and get over the idea people are staring at you, or waiting for you to trip over the

rug or spill your drink. You don't know how charming you can be if you'll just unbend a little."

We went into the front hall, and Katie tripped on the first step of the stairway and I caught her arm. "You'd better relax a little, too," I said.

When we knocked, a man in a purple waistcoat opened the door, another door popped open and Elise stuck her head and one bare shoulder out and said sit down, she'd be right out, ask Philippe for a drink. Then she pulled her head in and closed the door.

"We're early," Katie said, as if the world was coming to an end.

"Don't fret, dear," Elise called out. "I did say five-thirty, so people would start arriving by seven. There won't be much of a crowd, because hardly anyone's in Paris. All the lucky ones are holidaying on the Côte d'Azur."

Well, everybody who wasn't holidaying on the Côte d'Azur, which means the Riviera, was in Elise's apartment in less than an hour. That place was packed to the rafters, with everybody talking at once and in a different language. The whole place was jumping. Katie wandered over to where I was looking out of a window and yelled, "Why don't you mingle, Harry? They're just people!"

"They don't look like people!" I yelled back at her.

That party was quite a collection. Several of the men had beards, one a great long one that had a streak of grey right down the middle of it, as if it'd been painted on—which it probably had—and at least two had goatees, one of them a brilliant red. Most of the women had on skin-tight dresses with their shoulders bare, but there were some mannish-looking women, and some womanish-looking men. The place reeked of perfume. All I could do was wait for the sneezes to begin. I drank a martini and felt a little better, but not much.

"Is there anything I can get you, Harry?" Elise was moving through the crush with that cool dignified look that still didn't seem like the Elsie I'd met years ago. I said I didn't think so unless she could give me a bourbon instead of these martinis everyone was drinking, and she said, "But naturally, Harry." She took my arm and led me out to the kitchen and gave me a bottle of bourbon and a glass. "You don't approve of me, do you, Harry?"

"Approve? Sure I approve." I poured myself a stiff drink. "And what does it matter what I think anyway?"

"Do you want to know something, Harry? I often wish you had never come to Paris."

"That's nice," I said. "We'll only be here three more days."

Just then two dogs came romping into the kitchen and Elise bent down and hugged them and cooed at them. "I love them dearly," she said. "But I'll exchange them both for Skipper."

I looked at the dogs. They were French poodles all trimmed up, as if they'd just come home from a beauty parlour.

I said, "No deal, Elise. They're nice enough dogs, but Skippers aren't easy to come by."

Elise's eyes looked sort of unhappy. She turned on her high heels and clicked back to the party. By the time I came in she was slithering about again, with that cool little half-smile on her face. I saw Arthur Pope push through to her and kiss her on the ear and whisper something and she smiled and nodded.

"Shall we drink to the guest of honour?" I turned round and there was Jacques. "I have read his book. It reveals the struggle between the conventional American mind and the freedom-loving French. It is—how you say?—bogus?"

"You're prejudiced, Jacques," I said.

"I admit its excellence but I recognize its emptiness. Even a poor motor-car salesman may be permitted to comment on literature, eh?"

She's told him, I thought. Elise has made up her mind. It's Pope and the free Paris life and she has told Jacques. He must have read my mind because he said, "We are civilized men, eh? If a woman decide, she decide. We no longer carry the club, strike her over the head, drag her to our cave. You do not object to the handsome Hungarian who is charming your wife in corner. He kiss the hand, he make love with his eyes. You no object."

"I no object," I said.

He shrugged and strolled off, and I started looking for Katie. Sure enough, she was backed into a corner by this fellow. Making love with his eyes? Hah! Katie'd handle him.

I could see she was trying to push past him, all smiles but with that strained look she gets when she wants to do something and somebody won't let her. Then I caught sight of the man's face. It was about the handsomest face I'd ever seen. He had dark hair and eyes, and he was as

tall as I am. He moved as Katie did, one hand casually touching her bare arm, talking all the time.

I didn't like it. I wasn't jealous, I never get jealous, but I didn't like it. And also, Katie never looked lovelier. I was not angry, just miserable: Katie seemed to fit right into Elise's kind of life. We should have stayed home in Terre Haute. This Paris business was all a mistake.

There was an argument going on now; people were sitting on the floor and arguing about marriage. Someone said that French wives now wanted to be like American wives, with careers as well as families and husbands, and they were consequently growing unhappy and nervous like the American women. Then an elderly lady who looked like somebody's grandmother but was drunk said, But American men didn't know how to make love. They treated their women like queens, and lavished electric dishwashers on them, but only the European male understood love.

This Hungarian fellow was lighting a cigarette and he passed it over to Katie and she took it, and he said, "Perhaps we shall educate the so-charming madame by the time she leaves us."

I heard a woman's voice from way across the room: "What about Mister Willard? What does he have to say?"

"Hogwash," I said. "All you folks do is talk. Love isn't something you talk about."

They whooped and hollered and clapped then, and they all stood up, as if that finished it. A little fat man came over and shook my hand.

"Did you ever drink absinthe?" he asked.

"No," I said, "but I'm willing to try anything."

He went away and Katie was standing at my side. "Harry, help me," she said. "I can't get away from that man."

"You don't want to get away," I said, and Katie frowned and whispered, "Harry, let's go home."

"Home? Home's thousands of miles away. Enjoy yourself. You're in Paris. They'll teach you a few things."

"Harry, what's come over you? I never saw you like this before."

The Hungarian was standing there with a drink for Katie. He was smiling. His name was Rudolph Muschak, he said, and he was enjoying my sparkling wife. She was so charming, so fresh. And he looped one arm all the way round Katie's waist.

"You're kind of fresh yourself, Rudolph," I said.

"It's late, Harry!" Katie said, pushing at Rudolph's hand.

"It's only the beginning of the evening," I said.

"I have heard it said that American husbands are narrow-minded and possessive. Madame Willard has warned me of your violent temper. But now I meet you, I see she exaggerate."

"Did she tell you I was once a professional wrestler?"

"Wrestler, what is this wrestler? You are pulling my leg."

"Brother," I said, "when I pull your leg, you'll know it."

That really did make Katie angry. She turned round and walked away. I could feel my right fist all tight and ready, but I kept saying to myself, If you sock him, she'll never forgive you. You know how Katie is about scenes in public.

Rudolph started through the crowd after Katie, and then the fat little man came back with a tiny little glass with some green liquid in it. He explained to me how you sipped absinthe, very slow, one glass should last a couple of hours. That wasn't what I needed right then so I downed the stuff in one gulp.

"Is there more where that came from?" I asked.

All of a sudden my head felt clear and empty and the next thing I knew all that racket kind of faded away, and it was quiet. Too quiet. The strangest thing was happening to my legs. They were weaving and waving like a couple of skinny snakes doing a shimmy dance. So I went outside on a little balcony. The fat fellow came back and handed me another little glass and eased away.

It was just about then I discovered this gay little house down in the back yard, painted red and yellow and blue. I thought it was a kid's playhouse, and I couldn't believe my eyes when somebody opened a door and Elise's French poodles went inside. It made me mad, thinking of that house for dogs, not kids, and so I up and threw my absinthe glass with all my might and it hit the glass windows of that house. The dogs started barking and yapping and the glass kept falling and tinkling, and there was a hullabaloo behind me, and pretty soon there were so many people on that little balcony that I was sure it was going to fall off the house, so I went inside and Katie was sitting on the sofa and on the floor at her feet was that Hungarian fellow, looking up in her eyes. I knew then that I'd better get out of there.

I never would admit it to Katie afterwards, but I don't remember leaving that party. The next thing I remember is sitting at a table in this little bar they call a bistro and staring down at something in a glass that looked as if it was made of old lemon peels and then looking up into the bright black eyes of Jacques Sarignac.

HE SAID, "One is not savage, is one?" And then he started talking about the consequences if one behaved today like our ancestors, dragging a woman by the hair. I said the women didn't have enough hair. Jacques said the American was closer to the original man; the Frenchman had so many centuries of culture behind him that he could only smile and behave like a gentleman.

"Let's get one thing straight," I said. "I'm not jealous."

Jacques said, "You are purple with jealousy. It is delightful. I approve. It makes one to realize his inferiority."

"Jacques," I said, "is there a law against assault and battery in France? With intent to murder?"

"We have a more civilized viewpoint: if woman is the cause, violence is to be expected."

"I think I'll go and take a poke at Rudolph if you'll *pardonnez-moi,*" I said.

Jacques pulled me back down to my chair saying I should not try to prove anything by violence, that kindness formed the path to a woman's heart. "You see, m'sieur, what every woman wants is a home, security, *les enfants.*"

"What every woman wants is freedom, lovers, romance."

"But a woman needs a husband, and as many *enfants* as nature will provide."

"Grow up," I said.

"He tells me to grow up. Hah!" Jacques was getting pretty worked up all of a sudden. "This American, he tells me not to be naïve!"

"You've been giving me advice ever since we sat down here," I said. "I don't see why you're getting so excited."

Jacques stood up. He had a gleam in his eye. "I am excited because, m'sieur, you have convinced me! A man, if he is a man, must act! *A bas civilization!* I shall say, 'Elise, *ma chérie,* tomorrow you will go with me to my family's farm as you have so repeatedly promised. If you refuse,

I shall drag you by the hair through the streets of Paris to *la gare!'* You, m'sieur, have shown me the way."

"Don't put it on my head," I said.

"You, *mon ami,* and your wife and charming children are invited. It is a family celebration. Have you been to Normandy? No? You have not seen France. You will come?"

"Sure we'll come," I said.

"*Au revoir* then, till the train of the ninth hour!"

And off he went. I was feeling pretty sober now, knowing just what I had to do. I had to go back to the hotel, tell Katie I was sorry to be late and not once mention the Hungarian. After all, any civilized man would be pleased if his wife proved attractive to another man. Only a stupid American would behave as though an innocent little flirtation meant the end of the world.

On the way up in the lift I knew Katie was going to be angry at me for leaving the party and for coming home late. I'd point out how really funny it was, her being sore at me, and Katie'd see the point. We'd have a good laugh, and that'd be the end of it.

Well, when I got to our rooms, the place was empty. It stayed empty. After a while I began to worry about Katie. I began to imagine all the places she could be and all the people she could be with. Well, not all the people, either, just one person. I stalked up and down the sitting-room and smoked about fifteen cigarettes. I was beginning to get hungry. From the window, I could see the light spilling out from the front of the hotel and every once in a while the doorman opened the door of a taxi. Finally a taxi stopped and Katie stepped out. Then a tall man stepped out, paid the driver and made a little bow to the doorway, where Katie'd disappeared. I don't know what did happen to me then. Something snapped inside. That's the only way I can describe it.

But when Katie came into the room, I was sitting slumped in a chair. I looked up and yawned as if I'd been dozing. Katie took off her hat and shook her hair and asked if I was all right.

"All right?" I asked. "Of course I'm all right."

"I telephoned the hotel three times. You weren't in."

"I've been out on the town, in gay old Paree."

"You're—isn't that astonishing?—you're boiling, aren't you? That's really hilarious, Harry."

"That's me," I said. "Good old hilarious Harry. Always there to come home to."

"Harry, I want you to listen to me." She threw her hat on the sofa. That was a danger signal, but I didn't care. "Why didn't you lend a hand back there? You could see I needed you to get rid of that leech."

"Now, Katie," I said, "is that any way to talk about a man who's just taken you out for the evening?"

"Harry, if you don't climb down off that high horse——"

"I'll have supper sent up. How about some Hungarian goulash?"

"Harry!"

She stamped into the bedroom and I could hear her opening and shutting drawers—the second danger signal.

I pressed the little button that called the waiter and then Katie came bursting out of the bedroom, breathing fire.

"Harry, you listen. You ought to know how I feel about those handsome Joes who go round making passes at every woman they meet."

"Where'd he make passes?" I asked. "In the taxi?"

"I was speaking figuratively. Rudolph didn't make a pass."

"Oh, *Rudolph* didn't, didn't he?"

"I couldn't help learning his name, could I? I've been with the man for hours."

"Did I ask you where you've been? Did I once?"

Just then the waiter came. He stood by the door with his pencil poised and I said, "Two Hungarian goulash, medium rare."

The waiter studied the menu and then he shook his head. I pointed at something or other and held up two fingers.

When he was gone, Katie sat down and took her shoes off and she started rubbing her feet. "If that man brings goulash, Harry, I promise you I'll dump it out of the window."

"I don't see what you're so charged up about," I said. "I've been a perfect little gentleman, under the circumstances."

"Under what circumstances? What about the circumstances of your leaving me high and dry at my sister's party! What about the circumstances of my chasing you all over Paris, because Rudolph said he knew where Jacques would go and that's what I've been doing, walking, from bar to bar, all up and down the Champs-Elysées, and my feet are killing me!"

"Bistro," I said. "They don't call them bars. Well, just so long as you enjoyed yourself, that's all. That's what we came here for, so everybody'd have a good time. Each in his own way, of course."

"Harry, if you don't stop this . . .!"

"If you lived here, like Elise, think of all the fun you could have." It was as though I was wound up: listening to myself, I couldn't believe what I was hearing. "Maybe this is the life for you, Katie."

"If you keep on like this, I'm going to throw something."

"Can I get you something? Do you want something heavy?"

"Oh Harry, don't you see? Rudolph was playing a game; he really had no idea where you and Jacques would go. It was all a trick so he could be alone with me. Finally I called a taxi. Rudolph hopped in with me and then, going through the park——" She broke off and looked at me, with her eyes flashing, and I waited. "Harry, get that expression off your face! Yes, he kissed me. You might as well know. I slapped him. And then I told the driver to take me to the hotel, *tout de suite,* and I left a perfectly good new glove in the taxi, and if you don't get that expression off your face, I'm going to slap *it!"*

I knew I should grin or maybe kiss her. But I heard myself say, "I thought you said he didn't make a pass. What do you call a pass, Katie? I'm kind of curious." And that's the way I sounded, too—curious but detached. Katie stood up, with her shoe in her hand. I said, "No man can kiss a woman who doesn't want to be kissed, can he?"

Well, that did it. That gold-coloured, high-heeled shoe sailed through the air, straight at my eye, so I ducked and it went right out of the window. Katie was breathing hard, with her feet planted wide apart, and we stood there and stared at each other, waiting to hear the shoe break a glass down below, or hit somebody who'd yell bloody murder. There wasn't a sound. I stuck my head out of the window, but I couldn't see anything. "I hope you're satisfied," Katie hissed.

I said, "I hope they don't throw us out of the joint."

Katie stooped down and picked up the other shoe and threw that one out of the window. I watched it sail.

"Well, that one lit in a tree," I said.

Then Katie went into the bedroom and I lit a cigarette and called myself a few names and decided I'd better wait a little before I tried to straighten things out. Then Elliott came in.

He walked over to me and reached under his jacket and brought out a high-heeled gold shoe. He looked at me, in a kind of befuddled way, and said, "It's Mother's, isn't it?"

"It doesn't look like your mother's to me," I told him.

"It's got a Ben Becker label, and that's where she buys her shoes in Terre Haute. I found it in the gutter in front of the hotel."

"Go and throw it away, and don't mention it to your mother. She has a headache." I looked out of the window at the tree across the street. The other shoe was still hanging there.

"I hope it doesn't blow up a storm tonight," I said.

CHAPTER 6

It gave me a jolt when I saw, in the movie of the trip, the shot that Elliott took the next morning, a long moving shot of the Paris rooftops, dropping down to Katie's shoe hanging in the branches by its heel. But I never volunteered any explanation to Elliott because, until a kid's grown up and married, he wouldn't ever be able to understand how a woman who loved her husband could throw a shoe at him.

If you'd seen Katie's face that morning, you might've doubted that she *did* love her husband. It had been a cold night and the day promised to be colder, and I'm not referring to the weather.

She wasn't too pleased at joining Jacques and Elise on the trip to Normandy, and she wanted to let me know it and at the same time not let the kids know it. She was talkative and acting mighty gay. She always has the idea this fools the kids, but the truth is, it always makes one of them whisper to me, "What's eating Mother today, Pop?" Which is what Skipper asked us as we went into the railway station. "She's getting tired of *croissants* for breakfast," I said.

Jacques didn't drag Elise into the waiting-room by her hair, but she looked as if she was being dragged. He was exuberant and friendly, shaking our hands. "The sisters, they look alike, I see it now," he said. "They have the same two expressions, yes?"

I looked at Katie and Elise. "Yep," I said. "The Gold Dust Twins. They both got up on the wrong side of different beds."

There was a hoot and a clack and a clatter and we all piled on to the train, taking one of those little compartments. Jacques sat looking out

of the window, watching the rich farmland country get lusher and richer-looking, with its vineyards and its expanses of grain fields and meadows with fat healthy-looking cattle. He looked like a man who was going home, and I knew that feeling. You could tell that it was a prosperous part of the country. You'd see sleek, handsome horses, not plough horses but thoroughbreds, looking proud and strong and confident. If there's anything I love next to people it's a horse, so I sat there and feasted my eyes. Jacques caught my eye once and nodded; he knew what I was thinking.

The train kept making stops, alongside neat little towns, with white stations, and cobblestone streets curving between rows of stone houses, and finally Jacques herded us all off at one of these little towns. We got into a high old-fashioned bus with wooden seats, and we chugged and bumped over the countryside, down little unmade roads between apple-trees, fields of poppies that looked like red lakes, and the sweet-smelling vineyards. A light came into Jacques's eyes when we stopped in the centre of a village, with the church on one side with organ music coming from it and a big statue in the centre of the square. A big old black car was standing there waiting. The driver looked like Jacques, only younger, and he and Jacques hugged and smiled and clapped each other on the back. Jacques introduced his brother, and we piled into the car and whipped out of town to the Sarignac farm.

It was a big place, with three stone houses grouped round the farmyard, looking as if they'd been standing there for centuries. The barns and stables were enormous. People poured out of the houses, and they all started hugging Jacques and bowing and smiling at us. I couldn't understand what they said, but they sure did make a man feel welcome. They ushered us into the main house, which had rough hand-hewn beams on the ceiling, and we all sat down and stared at each other. There was an enormous man in a stiff-looking black suit, smoking a pipe; and a woman who must have been his wife, almost as big as he was, kind of smiling at us; and then there were all the others who I guessed were Jacques's relatives. It was uncomfortable at first, just sitting there on the stiff furniture staring at each other and not being able to talk except through Jacques, but pretty soon Jacques's father opened the brandy. "Calvados," Jacques explained as the womenfolk served us all. Then more people started pouring in, in cars and on bikes, all marching

in and bowing and listening to Jacques translating the same thing over and over. Elise sat off in one corner with a look of distaste on her face, and Jacques kept glancing over at her, looking as if everything had gone wrong and he wished he was back in Paris and hadn't dragged her along, by the hair or otherwise.

Then another car pulled in and right away you could tell that somebody important had arrived. Jacques's father stamped outside and ushered in a little old lady, in a long black dress with lace at her collar. She had a small wrinkled face and keen little eyes that snapped at you, and she was about as dignified a woman as I'd ever seen, even if her hands were kind of rough-looking and she was a little stooped. When Jacques introduced us she just nodded, till she came to Elise. She looked Elise up and down and said something to Jacques in French and he said something to Elise. Elise turned round slowly, like one of those models, and the old lady looked her over from head to heel, and then said something else (it was my guess the old lady had said she was too skinny), and Elise snapped something in return, which caused the old lady to lift her brows and smile a little, enjoying what Elise had said back to her. Then she took Elise's hands and turned them over and examined them, and I noticed the enormous ring the old lady was wearing. It sparkled in the sunlight. She looked into Elise's face, with her eyes crackling, and she shook her head. Well, Elise threw her head up in the air and sat down.

Pretty soon we all went outside where long tables had been set up under the trees and we sat down to eat. Each course was itself a full meal, and after about three or four along came a fish for each person, each one big enough to serve maybe three people. All the time they kept passing artichokes and salads that smelt of garlic and there was pea soup with sausages, and mussels in garlic sauce, and eggs stuffed with shrimps, and I don't know what else. Every time I thought the meal was over, the women'd come staggering out with more platters. We must've sat there eating for over an hour. Then suddenly everybody started getting up and stretching. I was stuffed. Jacques said, "It is customary to delay two hours before the main course. I hope you are not too hungry."

Jacques's father showed me over the barns and stables. He kept puffing away at his pipe and pointing to his prize cows and horses, and I kept

nodding and trying to indicate that I thought he had quite a little old farm, yes, sir. Then he took out his accordion and started to play, perched up on a chair under a tree. So I reached in my pocket and brought out my harmonica. Pretty soon everybody was crowding round, and Jacques's father kept going from one tune to another, with me managing to keep up with him. After a bit he took off his tie and his stiff collar and tossed them on the grass, so I took off my tie and my jacket and the big man took off his. It turned into quite a party, all in all.

Skipper was off with the kids, riding a horse cart, all of them yelling and shouting. Elliott and some of the young people were playing like kids; one young girl about Elliott's age was really pretty and bright-looking, and when Elliott started showing them how to have a three-legged race, it gave him an excuse to tie his ankle to her ankle. When he sprawled with her on the grass, everyone laughed and clapped and shouted—all except a dark-looking boy who glowered and looked as if he'd enjoy taking a swing at Elliott.

I could see Katie standing inside the window of the kitchen, so I *pardonnez-moi'd* myself and walked over to the window. Katie had an apron on and she looked more like herself than she had for days. She was washing dishes. I reached in and ran my hand through her hair and she laughed, and that's all there was to it, but it meant we were both sorry and it meant a lot of other things, too.

Feeling about a million times lighter, I went back to Jacques's father and I started in on "On the Banks of the Wabash," which he'd never heard before. But he joined in when I hit the chorus the second time, so I began to think up other songs like "Swanee River" and "A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody" and "Old Black Joe" and we had a great time. A lot of people gathered round and a girl who looked to be about Amy's age asked for "Stardust," saying just that one word in English, so I played that, wondering how she'd come to know it. Skipper came tearing back then, saying I should see the bullet holes in the barn where an American paratrooper had hidden during the war. So then I knew how this girl, who must have been a very small child at the time, came to know American songs.

When everybody started drifting back to the tables, Elise appeared. She was dripping wet, from head to foot, and her hair was plastered round her face, and her Paris dress was clinging to her and covered with


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mud. But she carried her head high. I noticed Jacques's grandmother studying her but you couldn't tell what she was thinking. Nobody said anything, even after Elise disappeared into the house. Then Jacques came over the hill, carrying a stick and swinging it at the flowers and weeds, as though he was hot under the collar. He came over to the table and sat down. Skipper piped up. He wanted to know what had happened to Aunt Elise. Jacques said, "She fell into the river. She slip. It is true I was angry, yes, but she slip."

Then everybody started to eat and to talk hastily about other things and in about ten minutes Elise came back out of the house. Her hair was all natural and blowing, and she wore one of those peasant skirts and a white blouse and no stockings and flat-heeled shoes. She looked like the Elsie I remembered, and about ten years younger. Jacques's grandmother moved over and sat down on the bench next to her. Then, Elise looked straight across the table at Jacques, and she stuck out her tongue. Only she did it in such a way that there was a smile behind it. Everyone whooped and laughed and Jacques's face was the colour of one of those ripe apples on his father's trees.

That meal reminded me of a family reunion back home, only none of the food here was like that. We had long loaves of bread, crusted hard on the outside, and Burgundy beef and roast sucking-pig with chestnuts and about the best cheese I ever sank a tooth into and cold roast duck in red wine, and tarts and cakes with wild strawberries, and a lot of other kinds of fruit. It all reminded me of a painting I saw once that always stuck in my mind. It was by a Dutchman, I think, named Breughel, and it showed people eating and kids running round and all, with wheat fields in the background. It always seemed to me to say more about people and what they really like to do and be than anything I ever saw.

Afterwards, saying good-bye to everyone and trying to thank them for the day when you just couldn't thank people for a thing like that even if you knew the language, I felt time rushing by. I can't explain it, but in the midst of all that gaiety and laughter, I could feel time going right past my ears, like a wind.

Back on the train, meandering through the dark fields back to Paris, I realized something else had happened that day. Jacques and Elise were sitting opposite me, with Skipper nestled sound asleep against her. I happened to glance down at her hand, and there was that big ring that

I'd seen earlier on the wrinkled hand of Jacques's grandmother. I looked at Elise, who smiled; and then Jacques whispered, *"Merci, merci beaucoup."* I didn't know what he had to thank me for. But then I started thinking, looking at Katie next to me, that maybe somehow all of us did have something to do with what happened between Jacques and Elise. It came over me again, that sense of time rushing by, and I was sorry the day was over.

On our way from Paris to the Riviera, we stopped at Versailles, and traipsed all over the palace and gardens. We stopped at Chartres to see the Cathedral and then scooted on down into the château country, full of places right out of a fairy tale. Some of those châteaux have upward of three hundred rooms, all elegant. You wondered how a man could ever sit down and kick off his armour and really relax in a place like that.

Amy had her heart set on seeing some caves that had some of the oldest paintings known to man on the walls and ceilings. "Nick O'Mara's idea," Elliott said. We all piled out and went in. Well, it was worth it. Prehistoric cavemen had painted pictures right on the walls and ceilings there—horses and ponies and wild bulls that looked as if they were alive and moving. It gave you a queer feeling, thinking of all those thousands of years. We bought a booklet called *The Caves of Lascaux,* and Elliott studied it for hours as we drove along.

We stopped at Carcassonne, which is the only truly medieval city in France, with a wall still intact round it; and then we rolled on into Provence. Katie said, "Look! Look, Amy! It's Van Gogh country!"

And that's just what it was. Amy has two or three pictures by Van Gogh hanging in her room, and they never meant very much to me till I saw Provence; but with the sun glaring down on the fields and the poplars, by golly if it didn't bring those pictures to life. Or maybe it's the other way round. Anyway, it sets a fellow thinking, the way a man can come along and see a place in his own way and put it down on canvas in paint and then, years later, another man can drive along and look at those same fields and feel he can see them clearer and better, just because that artist painted them a certain way.

My favourite place of the trip, though, was the coast between Toulon and St. Raphaël, where the red rocks jut up in crags from the bluest

water I ever saw. I could have stayed there longer, but everybody was eager to get to the Riviera.

I had an idea when we hit Cannes that I wasn't going to like it. Maybe it was because of the way Elliott kept looking out of the windows at girls in those bathing suits that just aren't there; maybe it was because no sooner'd we pull up in front of our hotel than I saw that little red sports car again. Or maybe it was because of that note that was waiting for Katie at the hotel desk:

Dear Madame Willard:
Is it not a beautiful coincidence that I have been urged to Cannes on business so that we may continue our conversation which was begun so charming in Paris? With deep admiration,

Rudolph

CHAPTER 7

CANNES, Nice and Monte Carlo—that's what most folks refer to as the glamorous Riviera. It's a great place if you like to dress up to your ears at night and undress to practically nothing during the day. It's an international sort of place, too; you can hear almost any language in the streets and beaches—Chinese, Italian, Hindustani, Brooklyn—but the language that really talks is an American dollar bill. As a matter of fact, a dollar bill just makes a little squeaky sound and not even a twenty-dollar bill comes right out and hollers. One of the reasons I remember the Riviera is, that's where I had to cable my bank in Terre Haute for more money. I didn't mention this to anybody; they were all having too good a time.

The first few days were nice and peaceful. I didn't see a lot of Nick and Amy, but enough so that I noticed that Nick was awfully quiet. He seemed to be studying all of us.

First pop out of the box, Elliott took up with this little French girl on the beach, wearing one of those Bikini things. She was always with Elliott; he even took her out in the evenings. As for Skipper, he badgered me into shelling out ten dollars, and he went trotting off and came back to my bench on the pavement with a pair of binoculars. One peep through them—you could practically see Spain—and I knew they must've been worth maybe two hundred dollars. They had a name stamped on them,

in gold letters, *Property of Samuel P. Goodwin,* but Skipper said he didn't believe he bought them from Mr. Goodwin, because the man looked more like an Arab. So we went on a hunt for this Arab, and Skipper spotted him just about the same time the Arab spotted Skipper, and that was that. He must have rubbed his magic lamp, because he just plain went up in smoke.

Then there was Katie and that Rudolph. If I'd let it, that could have ruined everything. I decided to ignore Rudolph.

"You can talk about ignoring him," Katie said. "I can't. He appears out of nowhere as soon as I set foot out of this hotel."

"Rudolph told me he'd never met a woman like you before, Katie. The more you try to avoid him the more he'll chase after you."

"You . . . you talked to him about all this?"

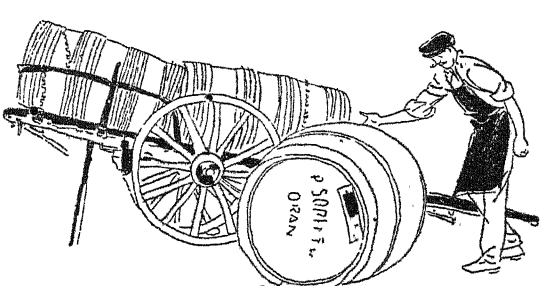
"Katie," I said, "that's the way things are done over here. You don't want me to paste him one, do you?"

"If you do that, Harry, I'll never forgive you."

"Katie," I said, "I won't make a fool of myself again. I know you don't give a hang about this so-and-so. If only he wasn't so damn pleasant about it, smiling and talking to me as if I'm some bystander or something. He makes it all seem innocent, somehow."

"What Rudolph has in mind isn't innocent, Harry."

ONE DAY we lunched with Charlotte Hatfield, who had rented a villa near Nice. It was pink and it was perched up on a hillside overlooking the sea. No sooner were we out of the car than she came plunging down the steps and took Amy in her arms and then Katie, and she even kissed me.



"Dahlings, you really came, isn't it magnificent here, oh, Mr. Willard as tall as ever, so strong and silent and *distingué,* my dahling Amy, *ma petite,* no wonder poor Nicholas has the shakes, come in, oh Nicholas, yoo-hoo, come out, Nicholas baby, he's pouting, Amy, why is he pouting, have you been cruel to my boy, have an *apéritif,* only not you, Mr. Willard, tea for you, and I do hope you've been behaving yourself. . . ."

When the drinks came, Nick passed them round, his face set and the muscles in his jaw jumping. Charlotte kept going all the time: ". . . now we can settle down to some serious talk, let us all sip our lovely drinks and discuss the marriage arrangements, it's obvious of course that you'll want it to be in Terre Haute, Illinois, and frankly——"

We all sat up straight at that and Nick clutched his glass so I thought it'd shatter in his fist.

"Mother," he said, "if I've told you once, I've told you a thousand times, Amy and I are not going to be married, in Terre Haute, *Indiana,* or anywhere else."

"*Nicholas!* There is no need to get vehement——"

Nick whirled to face his mother. "Get it straight. I-have-not-proposed-to-Amy, I-am-not-going-to-propose-to-Amy, and-Amy-and-I-are-not-going-to-be-married! What do you think of that?"

Well, Charlotte was too much of an actress to take that sitting down. So she stood up. "You'll have to get used to Nicholas's violent moods, dahlings, he's so emotional, I worry about him, I suspect he's fundamentally unstable, I'm only warning you, you're all so calm and collected and poised, now, Nicholas, my pet, let's sit down while we discuss matters in a rational manner."

For a second I thought Nick was going to pick his mother up and throw her over the parapet. But he walked over to Amy and said, "I'm sorry, I didn't know she was up to this. Tell your father, Amy—have we so much as mentioned the word marriage?"

"Nicholas!" Charlotte cried. "Don't you know how to handle anything, my poor pet, can't you do anything delicately, one doesn't discuss these matters, I begged you to leave me alone with the Willards today, but no, no, no, you insisted on staying, if you have any sense at all you will grasp this chance at security, this opportunity for marriage with a simple, lovely, Mid-western child who will trust you and love you, you will beg this child to be your wife!"

Now Amy stood up. I thought she was going to explode, but she didn't. She took Charlotte's hand and she said, smooth as silk, "Thank you for asking me, Charlotte. I can't remember when I've spent a more revealing half-hour."

And she turned on her heel and went down the steps.

"Nicholas!" Charlotte screamed. "Nicholas, go after her, run, child, you have been a bore and unforgivable, but she loves you, I can see it in her eyes, she loves you and she is hurt, oh run, what are you waiting for, you weak-kneed little wretch!"

Nick picked up a bottle of gin and went into the house, without glancing at any of us.

Charlotte slumped back into her chair. "You bring them up and you never know, I've done all I could, to see him throw away his one chance at a decent life, the travail that boy has put me through, popping in, popping out of my life, nothing ever enough!"

Katie and I both stood up and managed to say good-bye. In the car, we didn't say a word for a long time. But finally Katie blurted out: "I don't understand her or Nick or any of it, even Amy."

"Don't try," I said. "Relax and just drift, darling."

So we drifted back to the hotel, and Katie remembered a little shop where she'd spotted a wedding gift for Elise, so she got out and I went back to the rooms alone. I found Amy in a Bikini bathing suit Charlotte had bought for her in Paris. Elliott was doubled up laughing. "Pop, look at her," he said. "She's a mess."

Well, I looked at Amy and she looked back, just daring me to cross her. All the time we'd been in Cannes, she'd been soaking up the sun in a conventional bathing suit, so most of her was tan now; only there were parts of her that were white, and those parts were exposed by the little pieces of nothing that made up that Bikini. She was a sight, but I knew better than to say that. So all I said was, "Where are you going, Amy?" and she said she was going for a swim and she threw on a beach robe and stamped out.

"Son," I said, "this promises to be one of those days. I'm going to catch forty winks so I'll have the strength to face the rest of it."

Only it didn't work out that way, naturally. No sooner'd my head hit the pillow in the bedroom than the telephone shrilled like a wounded animal and I heard Elliott talking in the sitting-room, fast and excited.

Then, in a few minutes I heard hushed voices in the sitting-room. Even before I got up and went in, I knew the day was going along just about the way it had started. Sure enough, when I came in, Elliott stopped talking and turned to look at me, with his face the colour of a half-ripe tomato, splotched green and red. Sitting primly on the sofa was the little French girl I'd seen about with Elliott. Standing at her side, with one hand on her slim shoulder, was a big Frenchwoman. The woman's name was Madame Clébert, Elliott spluttered, and then he began to quiver all over.

Madame Clébert was enough to make anyone quiver. She had bright black eyes, stood like a ram-rod, and was bursting with righteous wrath. "M'sieur," she exploded, "m'sieur, it cannot be done! The rich *Américain* cannot come and do this thing!"

"What thing?" I asked, beginning to glare at Elliott.

"It may seem lightness and nothingness to you, in your country, m'sieur, but you will find that it is a costly business here."

"What isn't?"

"Hah, he laughs, he makes *américain* joke, eh? It is not so amusing, m'sieur. You will find. The police, they take interest in protecting the virtue of my daughter."

It didn't take much clairvoyance to tumble to what she was up to. All it took was looking at her, and at her daughter, sitting there half-embarrassed and half-determined, avoiding Elliott's eyes.

"If the rich *Américain* wishes the scandal"—she went on; a shrug—"he will have the scandal"—bigger shrug—"but if he wishes to close the matter without scandal, we can do so with quick dispatch!"—biggest shrug of all.

I lit a cigarette, thinking hard. "Madame," I said, "what is the price of the virtue of your daughter?"

Madame Clébert drew herself up, with her mind clicking behind her snapping eyes. "There is no such price!"

"How much?" I said again.

"If m'sieur comprehends that there is no price for virtue, we leave this matter entirely in his generous hands."

I sat down and crossed my legs. The fact is, I was beginning to enjoy this. "Son," I said, "what did you have to do with the virtue of this woman's daughter?"

Elliott didn't move. "Absolutely nothing," he said.

Madame made a great huge shrug then, smiling as if she didn't believe him and knew that I would not believe him, either. Then it hit me—out of nowhere. I uncrossed my legs. "Madame," I said, "my son will marry your daughter."

"Marry?"

"As a matter of fact, Madame Clébert," I went on, "I've been worried we wouldn't ever find a wife for this boy. Your daughter is an answer to a father's prayer."

"M'sieur jokes."

"Jokes, heck. Sit down, take the load off your feet, my wife'll be here in a minute. You might as well meet the whole family."

For the first time the girl spoke. "Mama, he speaks of the marriage?"

"He sure does," I said. "Elliott, phone down for champagne. We'll celebrate." I nodded pleasantly at Madame Clébert.

"The m'sieur," she said then, "he is—how you say?—comical man, no? Hah hah, he make joke."

"Hah hah," I said. "He sure does." Then I walked over to the girl and I reached down and opened her mouth and examined her teeth. "How old did you say this girl is?" I asked.

"Old? Old?"

"Is she strong?" I asked.

"Strong?" Her voice sounded a little weak.

"For the farm," I said. "We need strong women on our farm. Does she know anything about cattle?"

"Cattle?"

"Well, never mind. If she's not strong enough, we'll put her in charge of the hogs."

"M'sieur . . . is . . . ?"

"Here's the champagne! I'll open it myself, waiter." And I grabbed a bottle and knocked it against the marble top of the table, breaking the head off. The wine went fizzing and bubbling all over the wall and the floor. I walked over to the woman and shoved the broken bottle at her.

She was backing towards the door. *"Fou!"* she kept yelling, *"ce m'sieur, il est fou!"*

The waiter decided not to stay. He went out of the door, forgetting to make his little bow.

"Fou Américain!" the woman shouted. And she started making motions to her daughter, who stood up and went walking round me in a big half-circle.

"Fou to you, too, madame," I said.

The girl broke into a run and the woman backed out and closed the door. I turned to Elliott. *"Fou* to you, too," I said.

Elliott wiped his brow. *"Fou* means insane, Pop."

"Then she sure picked the right word. Come on, get some towels and help me wipe up this mess before your mother starts asking questions." While he was in the bathroom, I called, "And next time stick to dates with girls who have fringes and call me chum."

AFTER THAT episode, I began to think about Amy out there on that beach in her Bikini, so I went outside and walked along the promenade that runs all along the shore. I didn't find Amy, but I found Skipper. He was on a bench, with his binoculars. He said, "Amy's having a big time out there, Pop. You want to look?"

"No, thanks," I said. "Out where?"

"In a little motor-boat out there with Nick. They're kissing."

"I didn't let you buy those glasses for this, Skipper."

He looked through the binoculars again. "Now they're not kissing any more. They're arguing. Amy looks angry. . . . Now she's hit him! Wow! Pop, Amy hit him!"

I grabbed for the glasses, and found the boat. I saw Amy stand up, getting poised for a dive, with Nick reaching for her. It was like watching a silent movie. Amy turned round to Nick, and she said something, and then she dived in and started to swim for shore. Nick stood up in the boat, yelling at her, but Amy kept on swimming. All I could do was watch. I wasn't even surprised. I couldn't be surprised any more. I saw Nick go over to the wheel of the boat and fiddle with the controls, and then he whipped the boat round and came alongside Amy. He cut off the motor and leaned over the side, reaching for her, but Amy just swam away from him, and then he ran back and started the motor and headed for her again.

People along the shore line saw the commotion, and soon there was a good-sized crowd standing there watching Amy swim and Nick try to pick her up.

"I've got to hand it to Amy," Skipper said. "She's not good for much else but she can sure swim. Pop, it's my turn."

I handed him the glasses and started walking down the beach to where Amy was heading. She reached the shallow part, stood up and walked in, breathing hard, her chest heaving, but her head high. Nick yanked the boat round and then he headed straight into the shore. That little boat came like a bat out of hell, and ran up on the beach so hard the whole bottom must've caved in. Nick flew through the air and landed face down on the sand.

I ran over to Amy, and walked her back to the hotel so fast Skipper could hardly keep up.

Inside the sitting-room, she said, "Pop, I was never so ashamed in my life." Her teeth were chattering. "Let's go home."

"We're leaving tomorrow. Tonight if you say so, Amy."

She gave me a kind of faded half-smile and went into the bedroom, saying over her shoulder, "Tomorrow will be fine, Pop."

I SHOULD have known better than to take Katie to the Monte Carlo Casino that night. But it was our last night and she had her heart set on it.

We both dolled up in our best bib and tucker—which means my ten-year-old double-breasted dinner-jacket and Katie's gown she'd bought in Paris—and we went. Nick was there, alone, at a roulette table: betting and betting and losing and losing. We watched for a while, getting used to the hubbub and the glitter, watching the little ball click round and round and stop. Nick looked at me kind of funny once in a while, almost as if he was thinking of something insulting to say but he never said it. He made me nervous. I wondered what had happened on that boat with Amy, but I didn't want to discuss it tonight. Then in popped Rudolph. Katie, who was sitting down by that time, glanced at me in a kind of disgusted way when he came over and included himself in, not quite shoving me aside to stand behind Katie, but it amounted to that. He bent down and whispered into her ear, all the time smiling and cheerful; then he moved some of her plaques about on the board and, wouldn't you know, she wins.

Pretty soon I noticed that Rudolph wasn't exactly keeping his mind on the game. I happened to see his hand sort of drift down against Katie's

bare shoulder. It made me go all hollow inside. But I decided to ignore it. Then the next thing, he was standing there with one hand resting right smack on her shoulder. Katie reached up and shoved the hand off like a fly or something, but Rudolph simply smiled down at her in a pleased way. So Katie stood up, pushing back her chair and catching him in the shins with it, and she strolled over to another table where they were playing baccara. Rudolph strolled alongside. Meantime, I was getting hollower inside and my collar was getting tighter and tighter. Rudolph pushed in next to Katie, explaining the game to her in whispers. His left arm was all the way round her now. His eye happened to catch mine right then and by gosh if he didn't smile, as if we were old buddies or something.

That did it. I didn't even know I'd moved till I saw Rudolph sprawled



out on the floor. I wouldn't have believed what happened if it hadn't been for the pain that started in my right knuckles and then spread up my arm. It was the best pain I ever felt, though I knew I'd done just the thing Katie would hate.

People came running, and hollering in about seventy different languages, and next thing I knew I was being half-ushered and half-pushed by two men through a couple of fancy rooms, and outside, and then a couple of policemen grabbed me and walked along with me in between, neither one of them touching me.

I thought that I was going to be tossed in the clink, and I wondered how I'd ever get out of it, since I couldn't speak the language. But mostly, I was thinking of Katie and how she must be feeling. Those policemen marched fast down some stone steps and round a couple of curves, with



the Casino all bright and gay behind us. It was still worth it. If I end up in a chain gang in Monaco, I kept telling myself, it was worth it.

They took me into a little dilapidated café, with hardly anybody inside, and then out into a dim little alley-like street. There were a couple of French gendarmes standing about there, and there was a confab between the Monaco police and the gendarmes with all four of them glancing over at me once in a while. I lit a cigarette and watched my hands trembling.

A pair of headlights turned down the alley then; a car stopped, and I heard a familiar voice speaking French. Then Nick stepped into the light and came over to me. "It's all right, Mr. Willard," he said. "Come with me."

I climbed into the car and Nick reached out his hand, which was filled with franc notes, and one of the policemen grabbed them and tapped his cap and then turned to his friends and started dividing them up as we headed back to Cannes.

"They don't like bad publicity in Monaco," Nick explained. "So they turn undesirable characters over to the French police that way. The café's on the border, you see. The front door's in Monaco and the back door's in France. It's done all the time. I sent Mrs. Willard to the hotel in a taxi. I've got some questions I want to ask you."

"Nick," I said, "I've got a few I want to ask you, too."

"Why did you sock him?" Nick demanded.

"Because he's had it coming for a long time."

"You did it because you're in love with your wife, didn't you?" Nick was staring straight ahead. "How long have you been married?" he asked.

"Twenty-two years," I said.

"Twenty-two years. To the same woman. And you're in love."

"You're darn right I am," I said. "Now what about your telling me what happened on that boat?"

"Well, it all goes a long way back. You see, I've never met anyone like you or Amy before. And while you were on your way down here from Paris, I began to think I was really in love, Mr. Willard. The way you are. But when I saw Amy again, I didn't know how to handle it. Mr. Willard, I don't want to be engaged. It frightens me. And with a girl like Amy——"

"*Are* you engaged?" I asked.

"No. And now Amy doesn't want to be."

"Because of what happened on the boat?"

"That and a lot of other things. Do you know what Amy said to me once? She said it might be better if I loved my mother, rather than hated her. I didn't even know I hated her. But the more I thought about it, the more I knew Amy was right. And then I saw the way you and Mrs. Willard get along and I began to see all Mother's missed, and pretty soon I wasn't hating her. I was pitying her. It's all happened too fast, Mr. Willard. My head's going round and I suppose I shouldn't be talking to you like this, but I haven't ever had anyone I could talk to before." He twisted his face away. "Why couldn't I have had an old man like you?"

He slowed down then, pulling up in front of our hotel. The beach looked white and still in the moonlight. "Go ahead and spill the rest, Nick," I said. "I'm not in any hurry to face the music I've got to face up there."

A ghost of a smile crossed Nick's lips, and he said, "You've got a right to know what happened on the boat. Well, Amy was in a funny mood this afternoon. I think she'd decided that, since you're going back to Paris tomorrow, we might as well . . . have something, even if it was only——" He broke off and shook his head. "And I was a little sore at everything, so I said to myself, so what, why not?"

He stopped and fumbled for a cigarette. "I'm the great so-what kid, Mr. Willard." He took a deep pull and exhaled. "Matter of pride. So when she came out in the boat with me, I made a fool of myself. And while I was kissing her, she changed her mind. I asked her why she came looking for me if she didn't intend——" He swallowed. "Well, she slapped me and dived into the water, and I was so mad because I thought she was going to drown I nearly died. And after she made it, I smashed up the boat."

"You sure did, Nick. What're you going to do now?" I asked.

"I'm taking the morning plane to Paris. Then New York, and a job." He opened the door of the car and got out. "You take care of Amy, Mr. Willard. Take care of her."

And he went striding down the street, his shoulders hunched and his hands jammed down in his pockets.

I went up to the rooms, and I don't mind admitting my heels dragged. Sure enough, there was the whole family sitting there. I could tell from the calm expression on Katie's face just how put out she was. But just then all I could think of was Amy.

"Amy," I said, "Nick's taking the morning plane to Paris."

She lifted her brows. "You don't say? I'm sleepy." She yawned and strolled towards the bedroom. "I had a long swim. It makes me tired." And she closed the door after her.

"Did they arrest you, Pop?" Skipper asked.

"Why aren't you in bed?" I said.

Elliott piped up. "You laid him flat, eh, Pop?"

"How much did they fine you, Pop?" Skipper asked.

"Katie," I said, "you told the kids!"

Katie came over and took my arm. Her voice was hushed. "Naturally I told them, darling." She was smiling. "There may have been other ways of doing it, Harry, but that was your way."

"Children!" I shouted. "Get to bed!"

And when they'd gone, I still stared at Katie. She was smiling, with that devilish look I'd seen in her eyes when she was dancing in the street. Finally she said, "It was your way, Harry, and that's all that matters. If it's your way, I love it, darling." She was hugging my arm tight. "Just think—tomorrow morning we'll be on our way home. Won't it be great to be back in Terre Haute again?"

THE EXOTIC Riviera looked a lot nicer in the early morning when we turned away from the beach and up into the hills, going back to Paris. To get a picture of the part of the country we hadn't seen, we followed the Rhône River north, and turned off into the hills at Lyons, towards Vichy. For almost a whole day we travelled through the rolling country, where the mimosa grows so close together and so lush it's like sailing a boat through waves of yellow.

It was a funny thing, but once we got into Paris we all had the same feeling: that it wasn't a strange place at all. We walked along the Champs-Elysées again, all of us, under the chestnut trees, knowing we were leaving in the morning and that this was good-bye. Something was coming to an end, and we all knew it and really didn't want to talk about it.

The next day we went up to Normandy, on the same train as before, and it was like coming home, because Jacques and his family, in the midst of all the preparations for a wedding, took us right in. Elsie looked fifteen years younger; she looked like a child.

Elsie and Jacques were already married, Katie explained to me in our big bare room that night.

"They've been married at the civil ceremony, but tomorrow is the religious ceremony. Meantime, they can't be alone together. You do like Elsie now, don't you, Harry? Because you should look as though you really love her tomorrow when you give her away."

"When I *what?*"

"Oh, Harry, you don't even have to rehearse it. Just do what Jacques tells you in the morning. You only have to learn a few little phrases. I've got them all written down here in my note-book."

Well, I stayed up most of the night, studying those phrases in the light of a candle in our bedroom. And next day I marched down that aisle and behaved as if I was Elsie's father, and everybody said I did fine. It was worth it, too, when I saw Jacques and Elsie kissing each other afterwards. That wasn't a nervous peck on the lips, the way most grooms kiss a bride in America. This was France, and that was a *kiss*.

THE PLANE from Paris to New York stopped at Shannon Airport in Ireland, where we had a good big dinner, topped off by Irish coffee—which Katie swore was an old Irish custom but which I think is an invention of the air-line companies. It's a tall glass with Irish whisky in the bottom, then heavy black coffee poured over that, and whipped cream on the top. It's a good way to ruin coffee and it doesn't do a thing for that Irish whisky, either. What it did do, though, was to put you in a spending mood, and let me tell you that airport's no place to be in a spending mood. Katie said the prices were *unbelievable,* and that's just the way I'd found the prices all over Europe—unbelievable. However, I reckon no self-respecting man ever came home from a holiday with money in his pocket.

Katie fell in love with some Irish linen, and Amy got excited over some Connemara-marble bracelets—and Elliott found a sports jacket that, without it, he couldn't grow up or something. For myself, I thought I'd take some of that Irish whisky back to Terre Haute. The

only wise one was Skipper. He said, "If it's all the same to you, Pop, I'll just take the money."

It had been dusk when we left Paris and it was still dusk when we left Shannon and it stayed dusk all the way to New York, only then it was called dawn. That's how fast that plane was travelling. We put down at Iceland to refuel, and I slipped away to have a cup of coffee in the airport. Elliott joined me at the counter.

"Pop," he said, "what would you say if I told you I think I'll start college instead of enlisting? Because there's something I want to study. Before this trip I never had anything I was really interested in, but now I'd like to find out all there is to know about history—not just battles and dates. Before all that. Way back in the time that we don't know much about. As soon as we get back, I'm going to find out what's the best college in the country for archaeological study and I'm going to try to get in. Does this sound nuts to you, Pop?"

"If that's what you know you want, son, I'm all for it."

"Well, that's it." He stood up from his stool. "You know what got me started on this? Those caves at Lascaux. I can't get 'em out of my mind." We were walking back to the plane now. "Did you ever see anything so beautiful in your life, Pop? Did you?" And then, just before we went up the steps, he sort of jabbed my ribs with his fist. "You should have clobbered me a couple of times back there, Pop. I just wanted to say thanks."

And then he went up the steps fast, and from behind he looked like a man, not a boy. It gave me a funny feeling. And then it came to me that we'd had our first talk. We'd sat down together, like friends, and we'd talked.

ON THE PLANE over Pennsylvania and Ohio and Indiana, everybody got as excited as they had on the plane between London and Paris—which is right and natural, because I wouldn't give you a plugged nickel for a man who didn't get a kick out of seeing his own home.

And then, a few weeks later, after we'd had the rolls of film developed, we invited my sister over, and also that Ruth girl (who'd let her hair grow because Ell didn't like the fringe) and Elliott ran off the pictures. While the projector was clicking away, I couldn't help glancing round the room and thinking back on everything that had happened. I got that

same funny sense of time that I'd had before. In a month or two Elliott would be moving on to college and, after that, the Army; Skipper was almost ready to graduate from grammar school and, after that, it was no time at all till he'd be on *his* way; and Amy'd already moved off in a sense: she was a woman sitting there. I remembered Katie dancing in the street on the eve of Bastille Day. Right then I was *aware*. I could look back and I could feel the present and I could see the future, too.

The last reel flickered through and the sheet was white and bright up there on the living-room wall and then Elliott flipped off the projector. In the darkness, everyone moved at once, and then someone flipped on the lights, and there was Ruth, making for the front door, her shoulders set and her face hot with jealousy, and Elliott after her. "Ruth's gone to buy herself a Bikini," Skipper said.

Katie said, *"Pardonnez-moi* while I make some lemonade."

Outside I heard a familiar sound. The purr of a motor. But not like the motors of any of the cars in our neighbourhood. Then I saw Amy's face and straight away I knew why the motor sounded so familiar. Amy looked as though she couldn't move; she couldn't breathe, that was sure. Katie came to the kitchen door. "Harry, did someone stop in our drive?"

"Yep," I said, "they sure did."

There was a knock at the door. Amy was too paralysed to move, so Skipper leaped over and threw it open and then he started pounding Nick on the back, and Nick was stepping towards Amy, and I took a glance out of the window and sure enough there was the little red car. When I turned back into the room, Amy and Nick had just stopped kissing and Katie was asking Skipper to run down to the corner for some ice-cream.

So after Skipper'd taken off, I walked over to Nick and we shook hands and I told him we were all glad to see him and asked how long he planned to stay and he said he had to be back at the office in New York on Monday morning and I looked at Amy then, and it was like saying good-bye, but not as bad as I'd always imagined it would be.

Then I went out to the kitchen and told Katie to skip the lemonade and put on some coffee and I'd open the Irish whisky and whip us up some cream.

Then I happened to glance at the blackboard and, on top of the grocery list, in big white letters, I read, HIM. $759.62. So I said, "Katie,

what does HIM. mean?" and she said, "Don't you remember that TV programme we saw the night before last? You said you'd always had a secret hankering to try to climb one of those mountains."

"A small one is what I said, Katie."

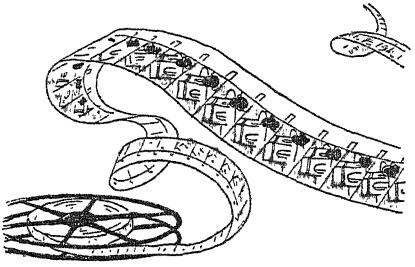
"Well," she said, "they have all sizes in the Himalayas."

"The Himalayas," I said. "Hmmm. That's near India, isn't it? I've always wanted to see Bombay, too."

"Have you, darling? So have I. I've got some maps in the drawer here, and the travel agent says——"

"Katie," I said, "what made you decide to pay a visit to Terre Haute that summer?"

"Oh, you know me, Harry. I've always liked to see distant places."





Marrijane and Joseph Hayes

MARRIJANE (Johnston) Hayes was born in Indianapolis in 1920, a year and a half after Joseph Hayes was born in the same city. Eighteen years later they met, married and worked their way together through the University of Indiana. In 1941 they went to New York, where he worked as an editor at Samuel French, play publishers, and began his writing career. He has written short stories, television scripts, and a novel, *The Desperate Hours* (Condensed Books, Winter 1956), which he later adapted for both stage and screen.

Although *Bon Voyage* is their first novel written in collaboration, Joseph and Marrijane Hayes have been writing plays together for more than ten years, and they plan to write more novels together in the future. Parents of three boys, ranging from one and a half to eleven, they now divide their time between two homes, one in Connecticut and one near Sarasota, Florida.

THE NYMPH AND THE LAMP

Decorations by Henry Pitz

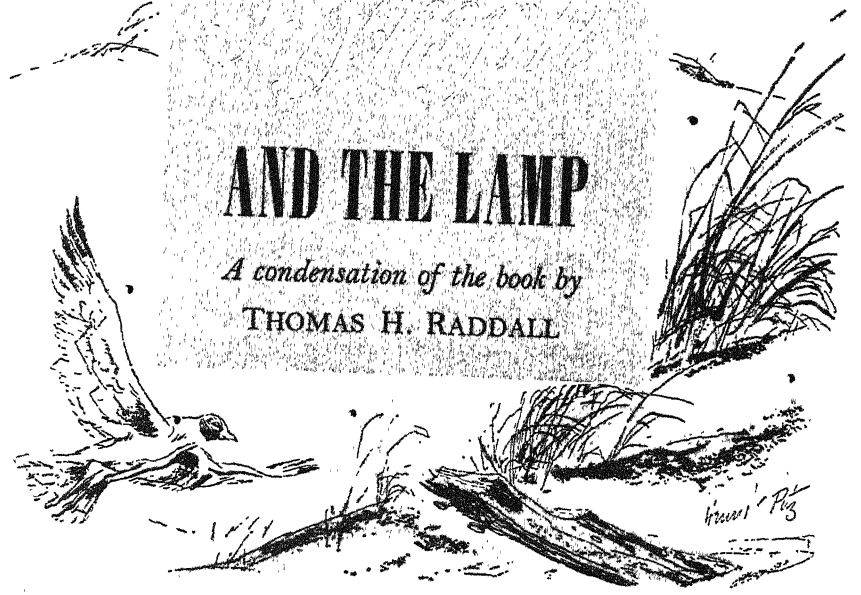


THE

AND THE LAMP

A condensation of the book by

THOMAS H. RADDALL



"The Nymph and the Lamp" is published by Hutchinson, London

THE NYMPH AND THE LAMP is the moving love story of Isabel Jardine, a sensitive, inexperienced young woman who leaves mainland civilization to make a new life on an isolated wireless station. Desolate Marina Island, "Graveyard of the Atlantic," off the Nova Scotia coast, is an eerie place, "haunted" by the ghosts of sailors. Here Isabel watches the man who loved her change inexplicably to a virtual stranger, and strives in vain to pierce the mystery which seems to hang like an icy Atlantic fog over the wireless station. The tale moves swiftly on through melodrama and tragedy to the final surprising solution of Isabel's dilemma.

This is the first modern novel from one of Canada's most distinguished historical writers. Its authentic picture of the growth of wireless telegraphy, its vivid descriptions of life on primitive Marina, and its very human characters, make it an unforgettable story.

"Exciting and moving. . . ."

—*The Observer*

CHAPTER 1

WHEN the *Lord Elgin* set Carney ashore at Packet Harbour he was already a legend on the coast. He was one of the small group of telegraphists who had manned the first Canadian wireless stations in the days when Marconi's invention was brand-new and regarded by most people as a species of black magic. For years he had served in lonely outposts, chiefly on Marina Island, a sandy speck in the North Atlantic eighty miles from the nearest land. It was a desolate place, the scene of many wrecks, and regarded with equal dread by passing ship-masters and the young men of the coastal radio service. Three or four times a year a government ship called with stores and mail for the light-keepers, the lifesaving crew and the staff of the small wireless station, and then left them to their thoughts.

Men who had served at Marina wore that service afterwards like a badge of fortitude. Their tales of the island and of Carney passed by word of mouth, by letter and by dot-and-dash gossip from Cape Sable to Cape Chidley. Even inland, on the Great Lakes, young fresh-water radio operators had visions of a giant with a yellow beard and mild blue eyes, a sort of latter-day Robinson Crusoe. They said that he had gone to sea as a boy and sailed before the mast in square-rigged ships; that he had helped Marconi to fly the kite that picked up the first wireless message across the Atlantic; that he had been in the Arctic with Peary and Bob Bartlett; that he was ill-educated and yet a kind of genius with the mysterious tangle of switches, wires, dials and knobs that made up the world's greatest miracle.

They vowed that he swam like a seal and rode the wild ponies of Marina like a Cossack; that on stormy days and nights he liked to stride along the beach with his yellow hair blowing in the wind, shouting lines from Byron at the top of his voice; that he was fifty or sixty and looked thirty-five; that he had been crossed in love in his youth and had never spoken to a woman since.

Some of this was false, some garbled, some true. The last was a fable. In 1920, when Carney left Marina for his first holiday for years, he was

just forty-six; and he spoke to the island women as he spoke to their men, in a pleasant voice that did not distinguish between one and the other. His manner was at once friendly and remote, as if he were separated from the other folk by the mysterious spaces of the ether in which he worked and thought.

In the early days radio work had a dreamlike quality that grew upon a man. As late as 1910, when Carney went to Marina, there was nothing to do but sit for hours with a pair of heavy old-fashioned phones clasped on his head, listening intently in a void. Sometimes Carney liked to recall those days.

"Only a few ships were fitted before the *Titanic* went down. The shipowners considered it a fad. Aboard ship you were a bit of a joke, sitting in a cubbyhole and playing with knobs and electric sparks. You'd sit, watch after watch, hearing nothing but static, and every half-hour solemnly cracking off CQ-CQ-CQ with your spark—like yelling 'Hey, Mac!' down a drain-pipe in the dark. If you got a reply it gave you a start. You felt like one of those old prophets in a desert somewhere, talking to Jehovah."

Carney had been at the Marina key when the *Titanic* struck ice and went down like a punctured can. He talked about that a good deal. The *Titanic* affair had made a tremendous change. By 1914 the sea air was alive with dot-and-dash talk. Then came the Great War and there fell another silence, weird and different: a silence so intense that it hurt, relieved now and then by some ship, attacked and desperate, flicking a scrabble of letters and figures across the void; or a shore station, solemn and purposeful like the voice of God, pouring out a stream of mysterious cipher and stopping with the final click of a water-tap shut off.

Carney had taken the war years as calmly as he took the sinking of the *Titanic*. There had been some danger. The island, naked and remote, especially the wireless station with its mast thrust into the sky, offered an easy mark for the German submarine gunners. But nothing happened. Bits of ship wreckage came ashore: a boat or a ship's raft splintered with bullets, and now and then a sodden ruin of flesh and bone rolling drunkenly in the surf with a life-belt still knotted about its breast.

But now the war was two years past. The phones buzzed with sea gossip again, musical now in the improved modern manner, dots and

dashes on every note from the high canary warble of the German ships to the deep drones of Halifax and Cape Sable and the clear wailing voice of Cape Race. Even Marina's hoarse bass had been changed to a shrill treble. ("They've made a eunuch of us," operator Skane had grumbled.) But, of course, these were trivial things compared with what was happening "ashore." The war had thrust radio forward a good twenty years. The wireless telephone had appeared, and now in one or two cities there was a strange new business called "broadcasting" that promised literally to set the world by the ears.

The world that Carney had last seen in 1910 had changed beyond his imagination and far beyond the bits of news that reached Marina in old papers and the operators' letters.

THE WORLD'S change did not strike Carney at once. The *Lord Elgin* had taken him off the island in the course of her regular round of the outposts, and now she set him down at the first port on the mainland and went on about her work. With an ancient suit-case in each of his big hands he walked up the rickety wharf, sniffing the westerly breeze with the enjoyment of a boy approaching a baker's shop. Carney was not quite the giant of the operators' fables but he stood six feet and had the chest and shoulders of a wrestler. The island cook had cut his hair and trimmed his beard in the close-clipped mode of Edward the Seventh, and he was clad in the faded blue serge suit that he had taken to the island ten years before.

Carney stared about him. Everybody looked queer, especially the women—skirts up to their knees and hats down over their ears. Even the streets looked queer. All these motor-cars! On his way to Marina in 1910 he had counted six in a Halifax street and thought it marvellous. Now they were everywhere, dodging among the horse traffic, blowing horns, giving off a great stink of petrol. What had happened?

He was bewildered. After all, ten years was not a long time. It had gone by very quickly now that he looked back on it. It seemed only yesterday that he was driving down to the water-front in a horse cab, on his way to the ship for Marina. Everything then had seemed decent and fixed in its pattern. Women in big hats, with skirts that came down to their toes; women without legs, almost without feet, moving along like images on wheels, towed by invisible cords. And men in bowlers, in

waistcoats with large and drooping watch-chains; men with big moustaches, with handsome beards. Carney looked about him now. Not a moustache anywhere except those comic clipped things under the young chaps' noses. And where were all the beards?

The wireless office was in a street near the wharves, where he had left it. Something unchanged anyhow! He approached the door with the air of a man coming home. It had always been more like a men's club than an office, with operators from ships in the port drifting in and out, filling the air with smoke and tales. In those days ops were comparatively few, and most of the shore-station chaps you knew. You shouted their names and punched them in the ribs, as if you were all a band of wandering brothers. Here in this room above the Halifax docks you were a god who talked across the world and knew your worth.

Carney's anticipation faded as he stepped into a severe little anteroom. Half a dozen hardwood chairs were arranged along the wall like those of a dentist's waiting-room. Through an open door he could see two young women typing busily, and beyond them another door with frosted glass bearing the words Superintendent, Atlantic Division. Two youngsters of nineteen or twenty, in merchant-marine uniforms with twined golden cords on the cuffs, sat with a resigned air on the row of chairs.

One of the girls came to the door and inspected Carney. He did not look like an operator. Operators were cheerful youngsters, usually in uniform, and inclined to be flippant if you gave them the slightest encouragement. The big man in the shabby clothes was different. She summed him up as a tramp skipper wanting to sign on an operator or to inquire about a wireless set.

"Yes?" she said, lifting her brows. She was a tall girl, rather pale, with tortoise-shell glasses. Her brown skirt was neat but too long to be fashionable, and she wore a cool white blouse. Her dark hair was done up in a thick bun at the back of her head. The young ops on the chairs ignored her. Their eyes were focused on the other girl, whose shorn blonde head caught the afternoon sun and whose silken legs they regarded with a frank and cheerful lust.

"The Superintendent," Carney murmured in his deep voice. "Is he in?"

"Mr. Hurd's rather busy. Is there something I can do?"



He hesitated. He pictured Hurd engaged in matters of importance to which the affairs of Matthew Carney were as dust. "My name's Carney," he said awkwardly, but in his rich musical tone. "I'm from Marina. I was told to report here."

"Oh!" she gave him another long glance. "Go straight in, Mr. Carney, please."

Carney passed inside and found a slim neat-featured man of thirty rising behind a glass-topped desk. Mr. Hurd wore pince-nez, which added a note of cleverness to an otherwise undistinguished face. His gleaming black hair was neatly brushed and there was a carnation in his buttonhole. At this moment his eyes were curious but his smile was like the sun.

"Carney? Carney of Marina? Well, well! At last!" They shook hands. The Superintendent waved him to a chair.

"This is an occasion, Carney! You know, you're rather famous." And seeing Carney's uplifted brows he said, "You know, the operators talk of Marina as if it were the last place God made. And they're a foot-loose lot. Any man who's stayed in one place for ten years is a phenomenon. And then, besides, you're a pioneer, one of the originals. Is it true that you helped Marconi fly his kite in Newfoundland?"

"Yes. What's queer about that?"

"Nothing at all. It's magnificent! You're—you're one of the great few. Everybody talks about 'Carney of Marina.' Do you mean to say you don't know that?"

Carney regarded him seriously. "There must be other chaps who've stayed in one place a long time. Nothing wonderful in that. I wouldn't have asked for leave now if it wasn't a bit important—one or two things I've put off too long."

"Of course," Hurd murmured, all solicitude. Men like Carney were hard to find. The new generation of operators were young, feckless—all for the blue water and the far ports of the world. When you hinted at a job up the coast they said, "Why bury myself?" And off they went, cap on one ear, flashing gold braid and winking at the girls.

"I'm going back, of course," Carney said.

"Ah! Good! Take a holiday—you've earned it. The *Elgin* won't be going back to Marina till the end of August, so you've three months clear. Anything you want? Money?"

Carney shook his head. "My pay's been banked all this time, you know. Nothing I want really, thanks."

"What about the station? You left Skane in charge, eh? A queer sort, but a good man, I think. I sent young Sargent down to take the empty watch, and he'll stay the full year."

"Yes, I talked to him on the beach, when he got out of the boat. Seemed a nice young chap."

"What about the station?"

"All right. Did you send down the paint I asked for? The sand wipes it off the buildings, blowing about in the winter gales. The radio traffic's falling off a bit but it still keeps us busy. All the liners seem to be full up with people sending messages, especially the westbound. Emigrants

pouring out to the States, the French boats, the Italian boats, all those, popping stuff at us by the hour as soon as they come into range—'Meet me Ellis Island with fifty dollars'—that sort of thing. Hard on the engine, running it day and night for such long spells. We ought to have another for a stand-by." As he said this, Carney's look was anxious.

"Um! I'll think that over. Everything's in short supply, you appreciate that. Terrific demand. Gad! A few years ago you had to sell the very idea to shipowners and masters. Now they come yelling for direction-finders, radio-telephones, every newfangled thing under the sun, as if we could pull it out of a hat."

When Carney went out, the tall typist came in with some papers, and Hurd said whimsically, "Well, that's the famous Carney—Carney of Marina. We all think of radio as something born yesterday, and there's old Carney to prove we're wrong."

The girl put the papers down for him to sign. "He doesn't seem awfully old. His eyes are like a boy's."

Hurd scratched his name at the foot of a letter and picked up the next. "Carney's forty-six. That's old in this game."

"He looks younger," she insisted. "I'd have said he was in the middle thirties—without the beard, of course. There's something about him, I can't think of the word. Innocent? And"

"And what?"

"And rather attractive."

"You're joking!"

"Not at all. Will you sign the duplicate of this one, please, it's for the marine-insurance people. I fancy most women would see something interesting in a man like that, in spite of those awful clothes."

"Ah, that's because he's lived on a desert island for years. Women never understand how a man in good health can get along without 'em, and what they don't understand makes 'em curious." Hurd smiled. Miss Jardine was an excellent secretary, serious and businesslike. He liked to tease her now and then.

She made no answer. She was looking out of the window at the row of masts showing above the rooftops of Water Street.

"Well," he said crisply, "there's the lot, signed. I'll see one of those young ship ops now. Send in the chap from the *Stella Maris*. Oh, and Miss Jardine"

"Yes?"

"Make a note of that chap Skane—the one Carney left in charge at Marina. He's been there two years or more and seems to like the life. A good operator, too. Another Carney in a few more years. We need men like that."

"I'll put a special card in the personnel file." Miss Jardine took the letters and went out.

CHAPTER 2

FROM THE time he landed in Nova Scotia, Carney could think of little but returning to his native Newfoundland. It was an odd sentiment; for there was nothing to be sentimental about. He remembered his father not at all, and had been separated at an early age from his mother when, after a second marriage, she was forced to send him to an orphanage in Saint John's. He had run away from the place at fourteen and shipped as mess-boy in a sealing-steamer. From that time on he had known nothing but the sea.

Accidentally, some years later, he met a man engaged in the strange new business of wireless telegraphy. The man was looking for telegraphists, and he was struck with Carney's knowledge of the riggers' craft, useful in setting up masts and aerials about the coast. Thereafter, Carney was stationed in various bleak places on the Canadian east coast, and finally at Marina.

The orphanage had taught him to read and write. The long dull watches of the night he spent in reading romantic prose, and especially verse which he admired. In time he came to regard such people as Wordsworth and Lord Byron in the light of gods, immensely more important than Signor Marconi; and he liked to get away by himself, walking for miles along the barren shore of Marina, shouting aloud the lines that stirred him.

And it must have been this, the music in other men's words, the romance of memory on which they chiefly played, and a craving to be touched even faintly by its magic, as poets were, that led him now towards familiar Newfoundland. He took a train to North Sydney and crossed over to Port-aux-Basques in the small mail steamer. Carney spent a month in Saint John's, wandering the dusty streets. Once or twice he

found himself before the orphanage, trying to make up his mind to go in; but he turned away. No! Nothing to remember there except the bewilderment of a small boy suddenly alone among strangers, the dreary daylight hours, the weeping in the dark, the slowly fading vision of a familiar young woman-creature, kindly in a placid way, who had called him Matty and let him run wild like the young goats on the hill.

Instead, he drifted to the docks. There, amidst the reek of old blubber, sitting alone against a bollard at a wharf's end and sucking slowly on his pipe, he was filled with pictures of his youth. There were pictures of a voyage to the ice fields: the sealers swarming over the ship's side, shouting, striking with clubs at glistening dark forms that writhed away, and paused, and then were still. And the stark beauty of the ice-pack, all white fire in the sunshine of a March afternoon, patched with scarlet where the seals had died, silent as death under the spring sky.

There were other pictures. The old barque—what was her name, *Cassandra?* Ah, yes, *Cassandra* and that voyage to the Azores when he was nineteen. He remembered Fayal, the soft air of one special evening, the giggling voices of women. And then the wine, the laughing drunken sailors, the scuffling and the laughter and the tumbling in the bunks. Matt liked the taste of wine but would not swill the stuff; something within had rebelled at making a fool of Matthew Carney. And so it was with the women. Excited by the fo'c'sle tales, he had dreamed of women and of conquest, with all the healthy instinct of nineteen. But in the presence of women all those pictures fled. Matt Carney could not bring himself to touch, much less make love to a woman. His shipmates marvelled. For women of the easy kind came to Matt in port after port, drawn to his clean strength like flies to honey. And he fled. The other kind, the "nice" ones, serene and aloof, were beyond his clumsy tongue —beyond his reach. And so as the years rolled by, Carney had withdrawn into himself, too clean to wallow, too bashful and too proud to beg, until at last he had a shell that nothing could break down.

At the end of a month the interest of Saint John's grew thin. Yet a man left rudderless must find something to occupy or to dull his mind. For Carney the usual ways were closed. Drunkenness and women were out of the question. Work was weeks and miles away. Movement and change were his only resources, and he spent a great part of the next two months in coastal packets, in trains and in strange hotels. He

remembered little of it afterwards. Quebec was a hill and an accent. Montreal a rush of faces, trams and motor-cars, Toronto a hot desert of brick and stone.

Towards the end of August he found himself back in Halifax, not quite sure how he got there, making his way towards the water-front with the instinct of a stranded fish. For a long time he stood on a pier, sniffing the harbour air. He found a room in a small hotel near the railway station and at noon he dropped into a seat in a small restaurant near the docks and saw across the tablecloth a young woman whose face was vaguely familiar.

She acknowledge his presence with a flick of grey eyes. In all innocence Carney uttered the glib greeting of the men he most despised: "Haven't I seen you before somewhere?"

She said straightly, "Of course. In the wireless office. You came in to see Mr. Hurd."

"Ah! You're the young lady with the glasses. I didn't know you without them."

"I only wear them at my work."

"You look better without them."

He said it with no desire to please, but as he would have remarked, for the sake of conversation, that the sky was blue. The girl stirred her tea and considered him as he talked to the waiter. Then he turned to her again.

"Can you tell me when the boat leaves for my station?"

"Next week. Are you sorry to be going back?"

"No. When I came ashore I felt like a kid out of school. But things didn't turn out the way I expected. Everything's changed. It came to me suddenly just now that Marina is the only place that had meaning for me. Sounds funny, doesn't it?"

"I think it sounds sad. Tell me—what sort of place is it?"

"Just a lot of sand, shaped like a half-moon. Little ponds of fresh water in the hollows, and a rim of turf and reeds and cranberry vines. Wild strawberries, blackberries and blueberries and so on. Nothing higher than your hips."

"No trees?"

"None. We get the force of every wind that blows. In winter sometimes the sand's like a blast out of a shotgun."

"You make it sound very wild and terrible," Miss Jardine said.

"Mind you, it's all right in summer. Miles of the finest kind of sand, pony rides, good swimming in the lagoon, surf bathing everywhere else—if you could tow the whole outfit down off New York somewhere you'd make a fortune hiring out bathing suits and beach umbrellas. But you can't. There it is, twenty-odd useless miles of sand, right in the North Atlantic ship lanes. Do you know what newspapers call Marina? The graveyard of the Atlantic."

Carney could not remember when he had talked this much to a woman. He offered her a glance of apology and found her looking at him curiously. "Go on," she said.

"The only people there are on the government establishment—lightkeepers, the lifesaving crew, the wireless operators and a number of wives and children. About forty or fifty in all. Everybody has a job to do or a watch to keep, so we don't see much of each other. The stations are scattered along the whole length of the island and there's a lighthouse at each end."

"How do you get back and forth?"

"Ride, mostly. The lifesavers catch a few wild ponies who live there and break 'em in. Everybody rides on Marina."

The waiter brought his order, a plate of fried potatoes and cod-steaks, and Carney attacked it with vigour.

"But Marina," Isabel persisted. "You said it had a meaning for you. What?"

He frowned at his plate. "It's hard to put in words. Maybe it's just the only place where I feel at home. Here, everybody's scrambling—what for, I wonder? Everyone shoving someone else, like a lot of sulky sled dogs. Well, we're not perfect on Marina, but on the whole we take life quietly. Clothes don't mean much. Money's nothing. Nothing to shove each other for. Anyhow, you can't go in for petty meanness on a place like that. God gets too good a chance to look at you."

Miss Jardine smiled. "I don't think I'd like that. It sounds like a fly under a microscope."

"That's because you've always lived in this kind of madhouse."

"Wrong! I was born on a farm, and I taught in country schools for several years."

"Why did you leave?" He was astonished.

"Ambition, Mr. Carney. I wanted to earn a lot of money and wear smart clothes and dine in those wonderful places I'd seen in the movies on Saturday nights." She looked about the drab little restaurant, rueful and amused. "My notion of a good time nowadays is to take the tram to Point Pleasant on a fine Sunday afternoon, and watch the steamers going in and out of the harbour, and the yachts slipping into North-west Arm."

"Why don't you go back to the country?"

"I couldn't," she said slowly. "I've got used to the city now."

"What do your family think about it?"

"They're dead."

Miss Jardine opened her handbag and thrust a coin under the saucer. "I must get back to the office. Shall I tell Mr. Hurd you're in town?"

"I'll report to him tomorrow." Carney jumped to his feet politely. She gave him a nod and walked over to the cashier. Then she was gone.

Carney reported dutifully to Hurd, who greeted him with the same effusiveness, and promised "action" (whatever that meant) on his request for a new stand-by engine.

The tall typist was not at her desk, and he came away with a vague feeling of disappointment. She did not appear in the restaurant. He wondered if she were ill. On Sunday afternoon, when the city was stifling and deserted, he took the tram to Point Pleasant and in a spirit of idle curiosity made his way to the old battery. There she was, on a red bench under the pines. As he drew near he saw a book open on her lap, but she was gazing towards the east, where the harbour mouth glittered through the trees. She did not hear his approach on the brown carpet under the trees and looked up, startled, when he spoke.

"I was afraid you were ill," he said. "I didn't see you in the office."

She flushed. "I'd probably gone out for the mail."

Carney paused uncertainly. The breeze rumpled his bare head.

"Won't you sit down?" she said, diffidently.

He sat carefully, and fumbled in a pocket. "Mind if I smoke?"

Miss Jardine shook her head. Her eyes were fixed once more upon the water. He lit his pipe and regarded the scene, clasping one knee in his big hands. The young woman held her attitude, silent, absorbed, as if he were not there. He had a guilty feeling that she did not want him there.

"Look here, Miss. I'm sorry. I shouldn't have done this." He started up, but she turned quickly, saying, "Please don't go. I didn't mean to be rude. I was just thinking."

"Barging in like this when I don't even know your name!"

"Do sit down, Mr. Carney. I'm the 'J' you see at the bottom of Mr. Hurd's letters. My name is Isabel Jardine."

He resumed his seat, but with a dubious air.

"This may sound strange," she murmured. "I was thinking of you."

"Me!"

"Well, I was looking at the sea and trying to picture Marina. You said you'd found a meaning in Marina. You see, I can't find a meaning in anything."

"Oh, but look here," he protested. "You're young. The best of your life's in front of you."

"How old do you think I am?" Miss Jardine said.

He pondered. "I'm not much good at guessing. I'd say, well, somewhere between twenty and twenty-five."

She gave him a swift glance. "You don't know anything about women, do you? In another year I'll be thirty."

"That's young."

"Not to a woman. You wouldn't understand."

He was mystified; but something in the melancholy set of her mouth, the bent shoulders, gave him a pang. His simple soul, which could bear his own woes with philosophy, was touched by this sadness of Miss Jardine's. Slowly sucking on his pipe, he inspected her profile with puzzled interest. She seemed very young, for all the weight of nine-and-twenty years that she found so terrible. Her figure had a look of vitality about it, the good long bones and firm flesh of the country-born. Her pallor came obviously from years in offices, in dim little restaurants.

She startled him by saying, "I suppose you're wondering what's the matter with me?"

"Yes."

"Do you know 'The Lady of Shalott'?"

"Who doesn't? That's Tennyson."

"Well, I'm sick of shadows, just like her. Shut up and seeing life go by in a glass. Knowing it's bound to go on like that."

"She did something, didn't she—The Lady of Shalott?"

"So did I, once." She hesitated, and then the words came in a rush. "It's one of the most hackneyed stories in the world, I suppose. Every girl wants to meet Lancelot. But I wasn't good-looking, the knights who came my way weren't up to the Round Table standard. Then one day, during the war, along came Lancelot—bugle, armour, plume and all. At least, he was a young officer just going overseas. I met him at a Y.W.C.A. dance. We were both twenty-four. He was good-looking and had ideals, and he liked me because I was serious. At the end of two weeks, I was in love with him. Utterly, you understand. When he kissed me, he could have had anything. But he really did have ideals. He asked me to wait for him and I promised—of course I promised! I was so happy I wept as I said it. When his transport sailed, I stood on a pier for hours, in squalls of snow, trying to find his face in all that khaki along the ship's rails." She stopped suddenly. "No doubt all this sounds schoolgirlish to you. Or is it only dull?"

"No," Carney said, "you're not dull."

"You've guessed the rest. I read his letters over and over again. When I went to bed, I'd take the latest and put it underneath my pillow. That seemed to bring him near to me. And I wrote, of course, every day.

"He was sent to France, and the letters were fewer. Then he was sent back to England. And, one day, the letters simply stopped. I never heard from him again.

"He had found a girl in London. He married her. I heard about it afterwards from one of his fellow officers in the Pay Corps. I don't blame him, you understand. You can't live on ideals and letters for long, not when you're young."

She took a handkerchief from her bag and touched her eyes. "Don't be alarmed. I'm not crying. I got over all that long ago. It's just the wind. I shouldn't have told you all this. But I haven't talked to anyone for a long time."

"I didn't mind," Carney protested. "I like listening to you. I've never heard a woman talk like you."

"Nonsense! All women talk—like me!"

Miss Jardine put away the handkerchief. She stood up briskly, smoothing her dress.

"I mean the way you talk," Carney said mildly. "Your voice, and the way you say the words."

"Pooh! That's the schoolma'am in me. Now I must go. I can catch a tram at the top of the park. Good-bye, Mr. Carney."

"Good-bye," he repeated; and then, when her light form was moving swiftly through the trees towards the road, "Miss Jardine!" She turned with a surprised look. Carney walked to her. The sunlight glinted on his beard and yellow hair.

"Look here," he said jerkily. "I'm just a chap from Marina, old enough to know my place, and I'm going back there in a few days. Would you mind very much if I asked you to have a meal with me, or go to a theatre? Just for company, you understand."

She was doubtful, he could see. She regarded him carefully, with the dress fluttering about her legs.

"Are you sure you aren't just feeling sorry for me? Because I'm quite happy. You mustn't think"

"I'm simply feeling sorry for myself."

"Well, in that case . . . all right. Tomorrow afternoon, after work. I'll meet you by the post office opposite the Boer War monument, at a quarter to six."

Off she went to get her tram, and he watched her out of sight.

CHAPTER 3

Miss Jardine's abode was a lodging-house in one of the lower streets in Halifax. Set above a grubby restaurant, it was a warren of small chambers, each furnished with a brass-knobbed iron bedstead, a birch-wood chest of drawers, a mirror, a cane-bottomed chair, a strip of carpet and a curtained wardrobe for clothes.

The air of the house was respectable, an adjective much employed by the landlady, Mrs. Paradee, a shrewd and vigilant widow. Although she tolerated late hours, and the noisy ways of her occasional showgirl boarders, she gave all her young women lodgers firmly to understand that she would have no nonsense about men in their rooms. And on this point she was both watchful and adamant. Once, accompanied by a policeman, she walked in on a party featuring an uninhibited dance by one of the more hilarious girls, and ordered all the guests into the street. Miss Jardine, sensitive and solitary, had been haunted by the memory of that tearful girl's face, at once bold and pitiful.

Yet Miss Jardine, while she was afraid of the formidable Mrs. Paradee, recognized in her a pillar of order, which has its virtue for timid single women in the world of lodging-houses.

When Miss Jardine returned from Point Pleasant she entered her room with all the relish of a sailor entering port after a voyage. It was nice to get back, and she had a good appetite for tea. She did not look forward to tomorrow's tea with the same relish. Now that she had time to think it over, an evening with the man from Marina seemed rather an ordeal. She would feel embarrassed and a little ridiculous, going about the streets with that gentle bearded giant in his suit of shabby reach-me-downs.

The odd thing was that beneath these doubts she felt a tingle of elation, and she wondered why.

CARNEY was early at the meeting place next day, wearing the reward of a day's search among the shops, a suit of light-grey flannel and a hat to match. He had even bought a packet of cigarettes. It seemed a futile way to take tobacco, but he was standing beside the post office puffing smoke in a determined way when he heard Miss Jardine's voice at his elbow.

"Here I am, Mr. Carney, fifteen minutes late!" Her face was pink and she seemed a little breathless, as if she had been running. "Let's walk along this way," she said quickly. She did not offer to take his arm. They joined the stream of office workers pouring along Hollis Street.

"You've got some new clothes," she observed. "I'm sure I wouldn't have known you except for the beard. But that's not true. You're so big. I'd have known you anywhere."

Carney smiled. "Why don't you say I stuck out of the crowd like a brand-new fire engine. That's the way I felt."

Across a small table in a teashop they smiled at each other. Miss Jardine blushed. "I've a confession to make. I stood in the post office for a while, because I wasn't sure I wanted to go through with this. Please don't be offended. I couldn't help wondering what Mr. Hurd or that blonde Benson girl in the office would think if they saw me with you. I wasn't even sure you'd come. I wasn't sure about anything."

"I was. You said you'd come, and here you are."

"Yes. You must think me awfully silly."

"I wouldn't have blamed you if you hadn't shown up."

She gave him a clear grey look and said slowly, "I don't believe you would. You're much too kind. It's a good thing you're going back to your island."

"Why?"

"You'd be disillusioned if you stayed here long."

Carney closed his big fist and opened the fingers slowly, inspecting them with a profound gaze. "Yes, life on Marina is all right for me because I've nothing ashore. I didn't realize it before. Now I do. Here's the waitress. What will you have?"

Miss Jardine picked up the menu. "Salmon salad. And some rolls, and tea." A cool young person in a green frock took this down and turned her impersonal glance to Carney. He ordered steak and potatoes and coffee.

"Make the potatoes chipped," Miss Jardine put in. The waitress nodded and swayed away towards the kitchen.

"What made you think of that?" Carney asked.

"Because you've got a man cook on your island and you eat your potatoes boiled or not at all. I've heard the operators. When they get ashore from Marina they eat nothing but greens and steak and chipped potatoes. Why not get another cook?"

"He's all right. Besides, they're hard to get."

She dismissed Carney's cook with a gesture. "Well, have you picked a theatre? There's a girl-and-music show at Acker's if you want something lively."

"I'd rather see a movie," he said.

"Ah! What kind do you like?"

"Anything except those Western things with chaps galloping about, shooting pistols. Like Marina in a nightmare."

Miss Jardine raised her brows. "Oh? I couldn't imagine anything less like your island than a Western movie."

"You'd be surprised. When you step off the beach at Marina on a summer's day you might be in the heart of Arizona. You can hear the surf but for all you know it might be a thousand miles away. And there you are, riding a half-wild pony on the dunes, with nothing in sight but grass and sand. We even use Western saddles and stirrups. All we lack is a villain after a girl."

"And a girl?" Miss Jardine suggested.

"Oh no. We've got a girl. She's only seventeen, the daughter of a man in charge of a life-saving station. She's the belle of Marina. All the young chaps in the lifeboat crew are crazy about her."

"And the wireless operators?"

"Oh, I don't know about Sargent, the new chap. But Skane—no. Skane dislikes women. If the Queen of Sheba landed on our island, Skane wouldn't turn his head to give her a glance."

"And would you?" Her eyes were merry. "Don't tell me that you've never turned to look at a pretty woman. A sailor!"

He smiled broadly. "Oh, I've always liked women, you understand. But I must say I've got along very well without them."

Miss Jardine laughed. "You stuck out your jaw when you said that! You know, you're not a bit like the creature I expected. The operators always called you a 'character'—meaning something queer. But you're not. You're absolutely normal. The rest of us are characters, scrambling after hats and dollars—and seats at the movies. We'll have to hurry to catch the show."

Inside the theatre, in the warm gloom, Carney sat forward with a rapt face, clenching his fists at the villain, shaking his head over the heroine's foolishness. Once, when the simpering maiden got into a predicament she thoroughly deserved, he seized Miss Jardine's wrist with such force that she barely suppressed a cry. In the same unconscious way, he let it go again.

When they emerged there was no moon, but the harbour water had a faint shine in the starlight. A liner with rows of yellow port-holes lay framed for a moment between the buildings on her way to sea. Miss Jardine slipped an impulsive hand under Carney's arm.

"How lovely! Don't you ever want to go back to ships? I would, if I were a man." They swung down the street in long strides. Miss Jardine's light clasp, it seemed to Carney, charged his arm with electricity. When they reached the street in which she lived, she attempted to withdraw her hand, but Carney pressed it firmly against his side.

She halted at last at a doorway beside a dingy café. "So this is where you live!" Carney exclaimed.

"It's better than it looks," Miss Jardine said defensively. "The landlady's a fearsome creature, but the rooms are very clean." She turned



towards the side door. "I'm sorry I can't invite you in. We're not allowed to entertain anyone in our rooms."

Carney had released the captive hand at last, and he stood awkwardly.

"Well, it's been very nice, all of it, Mr. Carney." Miss Jardine added quickly: "It was so kind of you to ask me." She put out a hand and he took it with a boyish eagerness.

"I . . ." he stammered. "Couldn't we do this again tomorrow?"

For a moment her fingers lay quiet in his grasp. Then he felt them stiffen and he let the hand go.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Carney. I couldn't. I've got things to do."

"What about the next day?"

A silence. Then, in a subdued voice, "I'm sorry."

"I see."

"Good night, Mr. Carney."

"Good night."

She ran up the steps. The door closed with a firm click and left him staring at the withered paint.

CHAPTER 4

THE MORNING before the *Lord Elgin* was due to sail, Carney took the ferry across the harbour to see about his berth. The familiar ship lay at a wharf on the Dartmouth side, loading stores, mail and odds and ends of equipment for another round of the outposts. She went about the coast like a travelling tinker, tackling every sort of job that had to do with what the *East Coast Pilot* called "all necessary aids to navigation," and doing them very well.

The quartermaster at the gangway grinned and said, "Hello, Mr. Carney! Going back?" Sailors working about the forward winch looked up and waved. The captain cried, "Welcome aboard!" and grasped his hand. "Ha! Knew you'd be back, Carney. What do you think of life in civilization?"

Captain O'Dell was a fixture in his ship, a thin grey man of sixty with a haggard face and frosty blue eyes. He had a wife and family but nobody in the ship had ever seen them. The *Lord Elgin* and the scattered posts and lighthouses were his life, as Marina Island was Carney's, and he looked at Carney now with understanding in his eyes.

"Civilization?" Carney said quietly. "You can have it."

O'Dell fetched a bottle of whisky from a locker below the berth, and took down glasses and a carafe of water from the rack beside Carney's head. He stood the glasses on his desk and tipped the bottle. "The sun's not over the yard-arm but a small one won't do us any harm. By noon it'll be too hot to drink anything but water. Say when!"

"When!"

"Well, here's down the hatch!"

"Down the hatch," Carney murmured.

They drank together.

"What about a berth for me?" Carney asked.

O'Dell made an expansive sweep with his glass. "The ship's yours. I've got no passengers except an assistant lightkeeper going up to Saint Paul Rock. I told the steward to give you that cabin off the port alley. Built into the ship for the Deputy Minister of Marine and Fisheries. All plush and mahogany."

Carney's lips parted in a grin. "The end of a perfect fling!"

O'Dell regarded him curiously. "That sounds pretty final."

"You'll never see me off Marina again."

O'Dell's thin grey brows shot up over the whisky glass.

"They'll retire you some day. What then?"

"Then I'll build myself a shack among the dunes. But I'm good for a lot of service yet, mind you. You might say I'm part of the government inventory." The thin clang of a brass hand-bell sounded along the deck outside, reminding Carney to take his departure.

He recrossed the harbour under a sky covered with grey scud drifting in from the eastward. A fitful wind wandered about the streets. When he turned in to the office to say good-bye to Hurd the first drops of rain were spattering on the pavement. The farewell did not take long. Having arranged for the wireless-station stores to be shipped, and for Carney's return, Hurd's neat mind had dismissed Marina for at least three months. As Carney came out he paused at Miss Jardine's desk.

"Well, I'm away, Miss Jardine."

She stood up, plucking off the glasses and casting a swift glance into the ante-room, where Miss Benson was being charming to an operator from the French cable ship in port. She put out a hand and Carney shook it slowly and released it.

"Let me thank you again . . ." he began.

"Please don't!" Miss Jardine said, with a warning tone.

In the ante-room Miss Benson's voice gave forth the gurgle that meant another conquest. Outside came a mutter of thunder.

"Good-bye," Carney said.

"Good-bye, Mr. Carney, and good luck. I'll think of you on your island when the station reports come in."

Her face was still pink. She was thinking, *I might have given him one more evening. It wasn't much to ask, after all.* She raised her eyes to his with a feeling almost of guilt, and saw in his steady gaze only the shy friendliness that made him seem so much like a boy masquerading in a beard. Impulsively she said, "I'm free tonight if you'd like to take me out."

She was rewarded at once by the gratitude in his face. "That's awfully kind of you, Miss Jardine!"

"Oh, I'm being quite selfish. There's nothing so dull as a wet summer evening in lodgings. I'll meet you at the little place where we had tea—at seven. Here comes Miss Benson. Don't say anything more."

He nodded with a pleasant feeling of conspiracy, and swung away, putting on his new hat firmly and turning up his collar against the rain.

CHAPTER 5

At five o'clock, when the shops and offices of Halifax emptied their human contents into the streets, the rain was falling heavily. Caught like everyone else without coat or umbrella, Miss Jardine was wet to the skin when she reached her lodging-house and ran upstairs to her room. She slipped off the wet garments quickly and put on a silk house-coat. On the stairs and along the halls she could hear the feet of other lodgers running, voices exclaiming over the storm, doors opening and slamming.

What I want most, she thought, is a good hot bath. When the last footsteps had retreated down the stairs towards the restaurant, she slipped along the hall. At the supper hour Mrs. Paradee's indifferent hot-water supply was at its best.

She returned to her room with a pleasant feeling of well-being. The air in the bedroom was humid and oppressive and she decided not to dress until the last moment. She tossed off the house-coat and sat before

the mirror brushing her hair. The house was silent except for a scrape of chairs in Mrs. Paradee's apartment just below her room; but in a few moments she heard a lone tread on the stairs. It sounded like the ponderous step of a boarder named Mr. Klaus, who was foreman of a wharf in Water Street. The footsteps came slowly along the hall and halted. Her door-knob rattled. She barely had time to pick up the flimsy housecoat and catch it about herself when the door sprang open.

It was Klaus, with his huge red face and barrel shoulders, swaying as if moved by mysterious gales. She knew the man tippled; but usually he drank quietly in his room and smuggled out his empty bottles with a ponderous air of innocence. Now he lurched into the room and shut the door with a slam that echoed through the house. Miss Jardine kept her composure.

"Mr. Klaus," she said quietly, "this is not your room."

He did not seem to hear. Instead he sat heavily on Miss Jardine's bed, propping himself erect with a pair of large tattooed arms. A bottle stuck out of his hip pocket. Miss Jardine stepped forward, clasping her housecoat about her as if it were armour of some sort.

"Mr. Klaus! Your room's across the hall. Go there, please!"

He turned his head cautiously, as if quick movement gave him pain. His blurred gaze considered her for a moment, looked away, and came back to her with sudden interest.

"How'd you git in here?" he demanded belligerently.

"This is my room. Please get out."

He considered that a moment. Then, flatly, "Out yourself."

Miss Jardine was indignant. She moved on swift white legs to the door and flung it wide, crying imperiously, "Mr. Klaus, for heaven's sake, get out before somebody comes!" He did not move. She went to him and put a firm hand on his shoulder. The response of Klaus was rude and sudden. He was not accustomed to being hustled, even when sober, and now he rose with a bellow, thrusting out a fist. Fortunately he was in no condition to gauge distance or even to keep his balance. The blow missed Miss Jardine completely and it carried Klaus off his feet. His huge body seemed to bounce on the bedroom floor. From his pocket the bottle shot a dark stream over the worn carpet.

Here was a chance to escape, but escape was far from Miss Jardine's mind. All that was stubborn in her Scottish blood resented this

intrusion into what was, after all, her only home, the refuge to which she fled after each day's work.

It was of no use to cry for help. The whole floor was deserted. In any case she could not call attention to this ridiculous scene. In her sensitive mind already she could hear the titters and sly wit of the lodgers, male and female, who resented her aloofness. Fervently she hoped that no one would come up the stairs.

The man was now on hands and knees, swearing softly and thickly. The fall had shaken him. He muttered, "Who left off that hatch?" in a tone of indignant wonder, and Miss Jardine had a hysterical urge to laugh.

"Mr. Klaus!"

"Eh!"

"You're in the wrong room."

"So?" He swung his head from side to side like a dazed bull. Her bare feet caught his attention and he inspected them.

"That ain't you, Babe?" he said dubiously.

"It's Miss Jardine," she returned impatiently. "Get up, do!" She placed her hand under his arm and pulled. Obediently Klaus heaved himself upward. He came to his feet swaying dangerously and throwing a heavy arm about her shoulders for support. They were in this attitude when Klaus cried, "Jeest!"

Miss Jardine glanced at his face and saw the bleared eyes fixed on something in the hall. Swiftly she looked at the doorway. At once she cried in a relieved voice, "Oh, Mrs. Paradee, I'm so glad it's you. You see"

"I see," Mrs. Paradee said.

Miss Jardine withdrew her arm. Klaus tottered and sat down upon the bed.

"Jeest!" he said again.

The landlady's gaze swept past him contemptuously to the overturned chair, the scatter of garments just where Miss Jardine had flung them off, the dark stain on the carpet. She sniffed and turned to examine Miss Jardine from head to foot.

"Well?" she snapped.

Miss Jardine leaned against the wall, astonished and suddenly afraid.

"How long," Mrs. Paradee said, "has this been going on?"

"You don't understand!" Miss Jardine gasped.

"I'm afraid I do. Klaus, get out!"

The man rose as if stung, and lurched out of the door. They heard him go down the hall, fumbling at all the doors.

"He came into my room," Miss Jardine began in a low voice.

"Oh, come, Miss Jardine, that's so old a tale!"

"But it's true! I'd just had a bath, and I was brushing my hair. . . ."

Mrs. Paradee tossed her head and uttered a theatrical "Ha!"

The disdain in her gaze made way for something purely malicious. Like most of her lodgers she had seen in Miss Jardine a superior air that irritated her. And now, magically, this superior person cringed before her, caught in a scene of utter disgrace! With the wide eyes of a frightened child Miss Jardine beheld a rising menace in the thin line of the mouth, the tense nostrils and the glittering black gaze that confronted her.

"Surely you don't think . . ." she gasped.

"Young lady, I've been too long in this business not to believe my own eyes. Look at yourself, practically nude. And with a man like Klaus —disgusting!" Mrs. Paradee uttered the word nude with a peculiar drawn-out emphasis that implied the worst.

"But how can you say such a thing! What have I ever done that you should think . . . why, it's outrageous!"

"Not at all. I keep a respectable house. You may keep your room for tonight. In the morning you must get out at once."

Miss Jardine nodded dumbly, turning a slow bewildered look about the bedroom as if to assure herself that all this was really happening. She shuddered. She felt defiled by something evil in the hard black eyes that searched her flesh. Mrs. Paradee put a hand to the knob, closed the door quietly and firmly, and passed along the hall and down the stairs.

CHAPTER 6

Miss Jardine sat weakly on the bed, still rumpled by the impact of her unwelcome visitor, and put her face in her hands. Humiliation, mirth, fright, indignation, all passed over her in waves like the chills and flushes of a fever patient. Eventually she lay full length and wept.

At last she sat up and drew her wits together. It occurred to her that the light in the room was dim, that, in fact, it was almost night. Suddenly she thought of Carney, waiting for her at the teashop. She sprang up and looked at her watch in the grey reflection of the window. Eight o'clock! How awful!

She drew the blind and switched on the light, and still absorbed in her thoughts, began to pluck fresh stockings and underclothes from the battered chest of drawers. In another twenty minutes she was walking quickly along the street. When she turned into the teashop she fully expected Carney to be gone, but she saw him at once, sitting at a table in a corner, slowly blowing out tobacco smoke. The ash-tray on the table held a small mound of cigarette stubs but now his big fist clutched the pipe. There lay the story of his long waiting. She was stung with remorse, but he looked up and sprang to his feet with a glad smile spreading over his face and crinkling the corners of his eyes.

"Mr. Carney, I'm always late, aren't I? But this is awful! I really didn't expect to find you here."

"I'd nearly given you up," he confessed. "What kept you so long?"

"I can't tell you—it's too absurd. It upset me for a time but I feel better now. I could even eat."

"Ah!" He beckoned the waitress who had been watching him so dubiously for the past hour. Miss Jardine did not feel hungry but she felt obliged to order something to accompany the meal of an obviously hungry man. She led the talk, chattering feverishly about the things they knew, the gossip of the trade, the movements of operators from one station to another.

When the coffee came, Carney looked at his pipe and she said at once, "Light up, if you like. And please give me a cigarette if you've any left." He lit a match for her. It was the first time Miss Jardine had ever smoked in public. She had grown up in a world that regarded the cigarette in female lips as scandalous, but she felt a need to dare something for the sake of her ego, whether it shocked Carney or not.

If he was shocked, or even surprised, he gave no sign. As a matter of fact, Carney was entranced. His acquaintance with women was very limited and he had never met one like Isabel Jardine. In the office she was prim and businesslike, in the park she had been moody and mysterious; here she was feverishly alive, she sparkled even when she

talked about her work. A sensualist would have said that she talked as if she were beautiful which, of course, she was not; any woman could have told him that she talked as if she were frantic, as, of course, she was.

He sat immersed in the flow of her voice, seeing in the amber glow of the table-lamp the brushed gleam of her hair under the little hat, the flush that came and went in the clear skin; and he was sorry when at last she looked at her watch and exclaimed that they were too late for the movies.

"What do you suggest?" he asked, helping her into her coat.

"There's a band concert in the Public Gardens. We might catch the last bits if we took a tram."

"Let's do that."

In the Gardens the benches about the central bandstand were full and so was the surrounding grass. A band of the Royal Marines was playing tunes from *Tales of Hoffmann,* and their red jackets and white helmets made a fine show in the glare of the canopy lights.

Well away from the crowd, Miss Jardine and Carney came upon a secluded patch of lawn in the shadow of a giant syringa.

"Let's sit here," she said. "The ground seems to have dried."

She sank down gracefully, tucking her coat skirt beneath her, and Carney sprawled comfortably at her side.

"We don't get many band concerts now," she murmured. "During the war there were bands galore and we had concerts all through the summer. It was quite wonderful. There's something about band music, especially at night, and out-of-doors under the trees" She paused.

Instinctively Carney knew that she was thinking of her young officer, the fellow who had treated her so shabbily.

"You still think of him, that army chap, don't you?"

"Yes," she admitted. "It was the only time I've ever been in love. A woman can't forget that very easily."

The air was soft and warm. It was the sort of night that comes rarely in Nova Scotia after mid-August, when the cool sea winds begin. A dreamy music swayed through the leaves of the shrubbery.

"I don't know much about music, I'm afraid," Carney said. "What sort of tune is that?" He took off his hat and tossed it on the grass.

"It's a barcarole."

"Ah! That's why I like it, I suppose. You could row a dory to that,

played a bit slower. On the lagoon at Marina, say, where the water's smooth."

"Lagoon—that sounds very romantic."

Carney laughed. "It's not a bit. No palm trees, not even a bush. Nothing on the shore but sand and salt grass and pony tracks. But we have a dory, a handy little thing we got from a wrecked fishing schooner, and we sail it and spear flat fish and eels."

"That must be rather fun."

"I think it is, anyhow. And it's something to do."

Miss Jardine looked about her, thinking how great a contrast it must seem to him, this lush place of grass and flowers and massed leaves, half-dark, half-garish in the reflected glitter of the bandstand, like a theatrical forest.

"And now you're going back to your desert in the sea!"

"I'd rather talk about something else."

"What, for instance?"

"You."

She turned her head slowly and saw his bearded face turned up to her. She felt her heart beating in vigorous thumps, as it had beaten when Lancelot first put his khaki arm about her waist.

Not consciously, but by the prompting of an inner voice, she knew that beside her lay a solution to her fears and loneliness, wasting, arid years of a woman who had made her own way, quite alone, since she was a young girl. She thought again of the humiliating scene in the lodging-house and saw years ahead, exposed to such hazards and defenceless against them. And with a cunning quite foreign to her natural self, she found herself saying softly, "I wish you'd tell me what you mean . . . Matthew."

For a few moments he was silent. Then in a low voice, "I don't know how to tell you, Miss Jardine"

"Please call me Isabel."

"A lovely name that. Isabel—Isabel. What I want to say is . . . I'm not a young man, not the sort of chap you ought to have . . . not the sort who has any right to say anything like this . . . but I can't help it, you understand? I never felt like this before. I'm just a rough chap. You're young, you're refined—you're everything I'm not. It's a poor sort of bargain to offer."

"Well . . . Matthew?"—in that foreign voice.

"I'm wondering if you . . . if you'd marry me. Don't say no yet. Hear what I have to say, my dear. I'm forty-six, but I'm healthy. I've got several thousand dollars saved in the bank. Means I'm not asking you to go off to some wild place with me. We'd find a flat in the city somewhere—buy a little bungalow, maybe, out by the North-west Arm, with a sight of salt water for old times' sake. I wouldn't expect you to love me —not as you'd love some younger man. I'd ask nothing that you didn't want to give, my dear. And . . . there it is. That's all."

Now that the thing was out he breathed a long sigh, as if it had required a great physical effort. And Isabel Jardine had a quaint sense of recognition, as if she had known exactly what he would say and how he would say it, even to that great breath at the end. But it did not strike her as odd that she should know at once, without the slightest reflection, how she should answer him. The physical implication of marriage she refused to consider. She knew, even without Carney's saying so, that she could remain mistress of herself, yielding only what she chose. What filled her mind was a picture of the bungalow beside the North-west Arm, and herself clipping flowers in the garden or busy with housewifery, at peace and secure at last.

She bent over him, putting out a hand to his shoulder, and their lips met. Under her palm she felt a tremor in his big frame. What she had first observed to Hurd, that Carney was, in a single word, innocent, came to her now with force. And she kissed him again with an almost maternal solicitude, as if it were he and not she who needed protection from the world. He did not move, lying on the grass, supported on an elbow, with his face upturned, accepting the touch of her lips and fingers in a kind of wonder, as if they had both fallen under a happy spell.

They said very little on the way back to her lodging. Carney was in a daze. Miss Jardine herself was excited; but her thoughts were very clear and she was aware of a crisis as they sauntered up to the front door at Mrs. Paradee's. She took her hand from Carney's arm and faced him with resolution.

"Matthew, I didn't answer your question properly, did I?"

"But I thought you did!"

"Because I kissed you? Well, it's true. I couldn't find words to say. Are you happy?"

"You know I am," Carney burst out. "In all my life this is the most wonderful thing that ever happened. I can't believe it's true. I've a feeling I'll wake up aboard the steamer, bound for Marina, with nothing but a headache from the skipper's whisky."

"Then suppose you kiss me again," she said demurely, "just to prove I'm not something out of a bottle." As his arms went about her she slipped her own round his neck, and he found her mouth warm and alive under his. They stood embraced and silent for a space of minutes.

"Matthew, don't let me go."

"I won't."

"I mean don't let me go now—tonight."

"But you've got to go to bed some time, my dear."

"Not in there! Not at Mrs. Paradee's!" she said rapidly, with a sudden note of hysteria. "Matthew, I can't tell you why, but I can't go in there—not after all that's happened. I didn't think I'd mind, just for one more night, but when we came to the steps and I saw that door again it made my flesh creep."

"But what about your things?" he said, astonished.

"My things! As if things matter when my whole life's been changed! Matthew, do you love me?"

"Of course I do, my dear, but don't you think"

"Then take me away with you now. I don't care where. I don't care anything any more. All I want is to be with you. You've been lonely—so have I. It's everything or nothing now, Matthew. It's got to be tonight."

She threw back her head, staring anxiously into his face in the half-light from the café window, while her body, closed in his arms, sought in some way apart from words to convey her urgency.

He was profoundly moved. "Tonight," he repeated in a choked voice. "Tonight!"

CHAPTER 7

Miss Jardine awakened slowly, her mind groping for its bearings in a confusion of memories. For a moment or two she was afraid she might open her eyes upon that odious bedroom at Mrs. Paradee's. The first glance reassured her; but at once she was aware of a set of

realities much more disturbing than the old. All the wild determination of the night before had gone. Her body felt strangely boneless and relaxed, but her conscience was as taut as a fiddle-string and it shrieked one long alarming note. With a swift dismay she summed up the realities; that she was in a strange bed, in a strange hotel room, and with Matthew Carney, a strange man; that she was in fact wearing the jacket of Carney's pyjamas for lack of anything else; and that she, an unmarried woman, a "nice" girl in the old-fashioned sense in which she had been brought up, had committed, if not the most shameful, at all events the most vulgar of sins.

She was thankful that Carney slept. She could feel his warmth at her back and hear his deep untroubled breathing. The blind was drawn and flapping slowly in a light breeze through the open window. There was a sound of engines shunting in the railway yards, whistles, bells, the iron screech of brakes, the booming collision of empty goods-wagons coming to a halt.

She wondered how she could face Carney by daylight, now that the madness of last night had gone. Whatever had possessed her? With every precept of her Presbyterian childhood ringing in her ears she wondered what punishment was in store. Then, with a surge of rebellion, she felt herself the victim rather than the author of her own and Carney's downfall. It had all begun with that ridiculous scene at Mrs. Paradee's. If it had not rained that evening, if she had not taken a bath or if Klaus had not taken a drink, her life and Carney's might have gone their separate ways, unblemished and unchanged.

Her Scotch common sense reasserted itself. Nothing past could be undone. The only thing now was to face the facts and make the best of them.

She felt the man beside her stir and turn, and knew he was awake. It was an age before he said quietly:

"Isabel, are you awake?"

"Yes." She did not move.

"Are you all right?"

"Yes."

"I was afraid—you lay so still."

She heard him fumble for his watch. "It's almost nine o'clock. I'll dress and get your breakfast."

"Don't go," she begged in a muffled voice. "We ought to talk."

She turned on her back, avoiding his eyes and staring at the ceiling. "Matthew, what about us?"

"Ah! Well, first we'll hunt up a parson and get married."

She had expected that; nevertheless she was relieved to hear him say it. Without conviction but with a certain petulance she said quickly, "I don't want you to marry me just because it's the proper thing to do."

Carney raised himself on an elbow and gazed down at her with a sombre tenderness.

"My dear, it isn't that. Shall I tell you the truth? I want to make fast to you now, while you're still confused and helpless, while you're still in the mood that came upon you last night. I'm afraid you may come out of it and run away."

A tremulous smile disturbed the firm set of her lips, and suddenly she turned and threw herself weeping into his arms. He stroked her hair, calling her his own dear girl, and repeating her name as if the mere sound of it gave him a profound pleasure. Gradually her sobbing ceased. At last she said, "I'm sorry to be such a nuisance. I didn't want to cry. Will you get dressed now, Matthew? I'll meet you downstairs. Give me half an hour."

When she joined Carney in the lobby, he phoned for a taxi and it drew up at the kerb as he came out with his suit-cases. They stepped in, and Carney called, "Drive us to a parson."

"Any choice?" the cabby said.

They looked at each other. "Have you?" Isabel asked.

"None." His eyes were shy and worshipful and she felt another surge of self-confidence.

"I think I'd prefer the Presbyterian kind. There's nothing more respectable. But it seems to me you've got to get a licence first, and a ring—I refuse to be a wife without a ring. And what about our breakfast?"

"I hadn't thought of anything," he admitted, with a boyish smile.

With a rich extravagance they kept the cab waiting outside a restaurant while they consumed a leisurely breakfast, and it took them on to Carney's bank and to a jeweller's. They came out with a nice old-fashioned yellow-gold ring in Matthew's pocket. Isabel kissed him warmly when they got inside the cab.

"You're such a darling, Matthew."

"I wish you'd let me buy a diamond engagement ring as well."

"You and your diamonds. I'm just a poor working girl."

"And what am I?"

"A blond monster with a beard. Tell the cabby where to go."

The wedding licence was a simple matter. As they turned to leave the office Isabel asked the clerk if he knew the address of the nearest Presbyterian clergyman. The man gave her a quizzical look.

"Yes, I do. But you realize you can't be married for three days?"

"But that's absurd!" Isabel cried.

"No doubt, but it's the law in Nova Scotia."

They came out into the street in a perturbed silence and paused beside the cab.

"Oh, well," Isabel said valiantly, "we'll just get a room at a decent hotel. Who's to know the difference?"

"Where now?" the cabby asked. Carney looked at her.

"Point Pleasant," she said.

As they drove through the park gates, she caught his arm and pressed it to her side. The road wound through the pine woods in a green twilight pierced by swords of brilliant sunshine. Presently there was a cool draught in the green tunnel under the trees, and they emerged beside sea water. They passed idlers and picnickers sprawling on the grass above the shore, then a rococo iron bandstand. Suddenly the old battery was before them.

Isabel ordered the cabby to stop. Carney turned to her, smiling. He found her facing seaward in that attitude, pensive and somehow sad, in which he had discovered her before. Silently he studied the pale profile. She was a creature of such quick moods. The weather of her spirit seemed so changeable, so utterly unpredictable, that he was dismayed. The thought that he might somehow lose her now was terrible. Finally she spoke.

"Matthew, I had to come here. I've always come here when I wanted to think, and it seems to me I've been going on impulse ever since yesterday afternoon."

"Yes?" he said thickly. He was trembling.

"It's strange," she went on in that musing voice. "I suppose it's been in the back of my mind all along—ever since you mentioned a job

'ashore,' and living in Halifax or Montreal. We've both been dreaming nonsense."

"No!"

"Oh, yes, Matthew! Listen to me, please! You wanted to give up your post on Marina because you guessed that life there would be unbearable to me. You thought—we both thought—that love in a bungalow by the Arm or even a flat in Montreal would be heaven. All the time I knew it couldn't work. You'd never be happy, Matthew—please listen—not really happy in what you once called a madhouse. For it *is* mad, all of it." She gave her head a backward toss. "I found that out yesterday between six o'clock and seven. When I came to you in the tea-shop I was the complete lunatic—bedlam could teach me nothing more."

Carney did not try to understand these vague references to Mrs. Paradee's establishment. He knew she had been unhappy there but this harsh, almost strident note in her voice was disturbing. Isabel sat rigid for a long time, as if she could not bring herself to utter what she thought. Suddenly she spoke.

"Matthew, it comes to this. You must go back to Marina."

A silence. Then, "What about you?" he asked painfully.

"Take me with you."

Having said this in a firm voice Isabel closed her eyes; but she remained tense, leaning forward with her face towards the immense reach of the North Atlantic and that far speck on the face of it which meant home to Carney and was such a mystery to her. For several moments Carney sat dumb, drenched in a warm flow of relief. Slowly she turned to him, and the cabby's sidelong eye beheld the passengers he had taken for father and daughter clasped in a passionate kiss. Then the bearded blond man turned and shouted to him, "Down-town again as fast as you can drive! We have a great deal to do before the *Elgin* sails!"

Many times afterwards Isabel recalled with laughter that wild dash through Halifax. There was little time for shopping. Carney pressed his pocket-book upon her, and with this she made her way swiftly through the stores. The dreamy mood was gone. Once more she was the efficient young woman best known to Hurd, casting up a mental list of things required, seeing, pricing, buying, moving on. At last in a taxi laden with parcels and new hand-baggage, and permitting herself a tremor of excitement, she arrived at the ferry wharf where Carney was waiting

with his suit-cases. On the way over the harbour to Dartmouth she passed him the depleted pocket-book.

"I've been awfully extravagant."

"Pshaw!"

"Matthew, I've never spent so much money at one time in my life. It could have been such fun if there'd been more time—going about from shop to shop, trying on dozens of things. Who ever heard of a woman buying a trousseau in an hour? But I've got some nice things—you'll see."

"I went in to see Hurd," he said irrelevantly.

She raised an apprehensive face. "Oh! What did he say?"

"For a time he couldn't say anything. He gaped. He stared at me through those pince-nez glasses as if I'd gone completely off my keel. I had to smile—couldn't help it—he looked so like a stranded sculpin. Finally he offered congratulations in a sickly sort of way, and got the Benson girl to make out a cheque for your salary up to the end of the month—very handsome of him when you stop to think of it. Here it is."

She glanced at the cheque and put it in her purse. "What about me—on the ship, I mean."

"I asked Hurd to phone Captain O'Dell. I've got a cabin to myself, and O'Dell's used to female passengers, lightkeepers' wives and so on, travelling up and down the coast."

"You told Hurd we were married?"

"Of course."

"You'd better give me the wedding ring." Carney fumbled in a pocket and produced it. She held out her hand.

"Put it on, please, and kiss me." He obeyed.

CHAPTER 8

CAPTAIN O'DELL met them at the gangway of the *Lord Elgin,* an unusual honour. Hurd's message had astounded him. He suspected that the lonely man from Marina had fallen victim to some artful painted creature seeking respectability; but he found himself shaking hands with a calm young woman with an erect carriage and a sensitive face, innocent of paint. He approved, and at once felt sorry for her. He thought of the life on Marina, so simple and primitive and so deadly dull.

How long would she stay? The *Lord Elgin* called at Marina three or four times a year with stores and mail, and the islanders reckoned time by her appearances. O'Dell gave Carney's bride one trip or two at best; but he concealed these thoughts with a burst of affability, slapping Carney's shoulder, calling him a lucky dog, and shouting in his high voice for a couple of seamen to look after their baggage.

The cabin built for the Deputy Minister of Marine and Fisheries (and never used by that worthy) delighted Isabel. With a schoolgirl's eagerness she exclaimed over the red carpet, the green plush couch, the great mahogany berth with its brass-handled drawers below, the water carafe and tumblers secure in their rack, the open ports through which the harbour water cast a dappled sunshine on the bulkhead.

Carney left her to unpack. When the bell rang for the evening meal he found her arrayed in a new yellow frock, and with her mouth full of hairpins, putting the final touches to her *coiffure*.

"How do you like my dress?" she demanded through the pins. "It's awfully short, do you mind? I feel all legs."

"You look very nice, legs and all."

"It's the fashion," she said, a little self-consciously.

They entered the saloon together and found the officers standing politely at their places about the table. The sudden reappearance of the famous Carney with a wife was a phenomenon as startling as the appearance of a bright new satellite beside the Polar Star, and the officers regarded Isabel with the same professional interest.

Their curiosity was a challenge and Isabel accepted it with spirit, chatting vivaciously with O'Dell and from time to time casting a smiling glance to meet Carney's own adoring gaze. He was proud of her in the presence of these men he had known for years and he showed it in his smile.

The happiest moment came with the dessert, when at a signal from Captain O'Dell the steward went round with a bottle of champagne, and they all rose and drank, in the captain's words, "To the new queen of Marina, and long may she reign!"

Then there were sounds of winches turning on the deck outside, and the voices of longshoremen, and in a few moments O'Dell and his mates withdrew to take the ship to sea.

The sun had withdrawn behind the harbour hills. In the shadow of

Citadel Hill, Halifax was already putting on the artificial glitter of its night. The lights winked like fire-flies, and Isabel, standing beside Carney on the bridge, felt a momentary homesick pang. Then the memory of Mrs. Paradee's establishment rose out of the dusk like an apparition, and she turned her face happily towards the bow. Far ahead she saw the Mauger's Beach lighthouse flashing in the twilight, a signpost on the way to adventure. She caught Carney's arm.

"I've never been beyond this point. What's that out there?"

"Chebucto Head. Where the sea really begins. It'll be a bit rough, I'm afraid."

The ship had begun to dip and sway on a long swell running in past the harbour heads. Towards the sea all was darkness, and Isabel realized for the first time how thoroughly she was plunging her life into the unknown. She held Carney's arm tighter in the heaving darkness.

"The water's really quite rough, isn't it?" she said. "It seems strange, with hardly any wind."

"There's been a south-easter out there," he gestured into the night, "and we're getting the swell it's kicked up." He added casually, "She'll roll worse by and by. You really don't mind the motion?"

"I'm enjoying it."

But later, when the *Lord Elgin* began to fulfil Carney's prophecy, her skin felt strangely chilled, as if a cold wind blew.

"I think I'll go below—that's the word, isn't it?" Turning to him with a low, intimate voice she added, "Come to me soon."

"How soon?" he murmured.

"I'll give you half an hour with the other men." He laughed gently, and she caught his hand and pressed it in the darkness.

The cabin looked very snug in the pink glow of the shaded lamp above the couch, but somehow the lurching of the ship seemed more violent within doors. The sea-legs of which Isabel had been so proud could not prevent her staggering as she undressed. Twice she almost fell. A clammy *malaise* spread through her flesh and sent her stumbling to the couch, where she lay coldly perspiring and gasping for breath.

When the bridegroom came he found a wretched creature ill apparently to the point of death, and clad in a black gossamer nightgown whose purpose had been lost. He lifted her into the berth and covered her with a blanket. There Isabel lay through the night and most of the

next day, staring glassily at the peeling white paint on the deck above, while Carney gently forced an occasional spoonful of brandy between her lips, or carried her limp form into the giddily tossing bathroom.

All Isabel's blissful fancies had fled. She felt herself the victim of a hideous joke; and while one part of her mind was grateful for Carney's tenderness, the rest regarded with a sullen resentment his very presence in this utter ruin of her pride.

More than this, with the bitter inconsistency of the sick, she began to think that the whole course of affairs was Matthew's fault. She regretted that she had ever met him and wished fervently that by some stroke of magic all could be undone.

The water in the carafe, the coats on the hooks, swept back and forth in a tireless dance. The ship was full of sound—groans, creaks, the hiss of water flung over the bow, an occasional running footfall on the deck overhead—as it carried her ever farther into a purgatory from which there was no redemption or escape. Her Calvinist conscience chanted dismally, *You've been wicked and foolish, and this is the result.* The remorseless engines pounded the refrain, *is the result . . . is the result . . . is the result . . .* on and on through the night, through the chill sea dawn, and far into the next afternoon.

"Well, there it is," O'Dell said, squinting against the glare, "and you can see the surf from here." He passed his binoculars with an indignant thrust. Carney put them up and stared for a long time towards the shore.

"I see," he said deliberately. "Well, I wouldn't say it was bad, Captain. The swell's definitely going down."

"So you say!" And in a sudden shout forward, "All ready the anchors, Mister?"

"All ready, sir."

"Stand by to let go. Bosun!"

"Aye, sir!"

"Make ready the motor-boat."

These distant voices, the reduced clamour of the engines, the changed motion of the ship, all came to Isabel with a realization that the longed-for end of a nightmare had come. Matthew found her sitting up in the berth and peering at the port-hole.

"We're there," he announced cheerfully.

"I can't see anything."

"The island's on the other side. How do you feel?"

"Horrible."

"Shall I help you dress?"

"No." Her voice was sullen.

"I'll wait for you on deck, then. Don't hurry, my dear. The ship will be here for several hours, and the landing will be better later on."

Her head ached violently and there was still a miserable sensation in her stomach. When at last she was dressed and packed for the shore, she made her way to the deck on trembling legs. When Matthew greeted her she answered him curtly and gripped the rail for support. He stretched an arm eagerly towards the shore. There was not much to be seen. The *Lord Elgin* lay a mile off the beach, and far in the sunshine a line of white surf flickered. A lighthouse stood bold in the sun at the west tip of the island and far towards the east she could see the mirage-twisted pillar of another.

Carney's big finger stabbed the scene. "This is where we'll land—where you see the red watchtower on the dune. A mile to the left you may be able to make out a tall mast—ours, of course. Four miles east of that is Number Two, a beach-patrol station. And four miles farther east you come to Number Three—about there, say—another patrol station, chap with a big family, has a garden, grows the biggest potatoes and turnips you ever saw in your life, mixture of sand and pony manure—amazing! Another four or five miles beyond that is Number Four—same story, barring the turnips. Finally there's East Light—the farthest from us. Forty-five men, women and children altogether—all on the government establishment. Not another soul."

Isabel's mind called up a vision of small dwellings withdrawn one from another among the miles of dunes, and in each a little group of humans living secret lives as if afraid of this immensity of sea and sky. Matthew murmured, "What do you think of it?"

"It's not what I'd expected."

"You're not disappointed?"

"I'd pictured quite big hills of sand, and everybody living together in a sort of village by the shore. Where is the lagoon?"

"On the other side. The dunes will look bigger when you're on the beach, but of course they're not much. The highest I suppose is about a hundred and fifty feet. Marina's only a glorified sand bar, after all."

"The wrecks you talked about—where are they?"

"Ah, that's what everybody asks. Well, the wooden ships break up quickly and the sea pitches the wreckage up the beach and into the dunes. The sand soon covers most of it. The iron hulls break up completely, too, after a time, and of course all that sinks out of sight. Here and there you'll see an iron stem or stern-post sticking up, but that's all."

"When are we going ashore?"

"We could go now, if you like. There's still a bit of surf on the beach but it's all right."

"If you have any feeling for me, get me there quickly."

He hailed an island boat just coming alongside. Five men in faded shirts and trousers and rubber sea-boots looked up and shouted. Their teeth flashed in the brown faces upturned to the sun. They were young and lean, but they cried up to him "Carney boy!" as if he were one of them; and Matthew answered in kind, singing out nicknames in his strong voice and smiling on them like an older brother returned from the wars. His blue eyes shone.

He belongs to all this, Isabel thought, *he's theirs, not mine.* She and Matthew were creatures of different worlds; and already his world had sickened and humiliated her. She saw with a chill dismay the cargo net go down with Carney's shabby suit-cases and her own smart things. Matthew took her arm and moved towards the forward deck where the rope ladder hung down the side.

"Now, my dear, hold tight to the ropes as you go down, and feel for each step with your foot. I'll be just below you, so don't be afraid." He swung himself over the bulwark. Looking down, Isabel saw the ladder swaying. It seemed a frightful distance down to the boat and its sunburnt crew, rising and falling on the swell. Panic seized her. For several moments she could not breathe and the nausea of the past twenty hours was replaced with a surge of utter fear. She clenched her teeth and fought it down. A sailor helped her over the side. Captain O'Dell, leaning over the bridge screen, saw the young woman descend towards the boat, and caught one glimpse of an upturned face, white and resolute, before she passed from his sight.

In the boat the steersman with a mute gesture offered Carney the long stern oar. He took it and stood with his feet braced, gazing towards the shore. His head was bare, the bleached-hemp locks blew about his

forehead, and with his clipped beard, his sachem nose, his steady blue eyes oblivious of the sun's blaze on the water, he seemed to Isabel the spirit incarnate of this wilderness.

The launch towed them to the milky backwash of the outer shoals and then swung away. The boatmen slid out their oars. For a time they rowed in silence. Then Carney spoke. "Easy all!" They rested with raised oars while Carney kept the boat's stern to the sea with powerful movements of the sweep. One, two, three ponderous swells in the endless succession lifted the boat, dropped it, and passed on. In the deep green valleys, where the boat seemed to be shut in from everything but the sky, Isabel was conscious of a terrible loneliness. The voice within, more insistent than ever, cried *Fool! Fool! Fool!* With a bitter wonder she thought upon the office, the old life that had seemed so dull and meaningless and now was like a peaceful dream.

Another swell advanced upon them, overtook them; a rolling hill of green marble veined with white, ponderous, glistening and alive; and as the boat's stern rose and tossed Carney's big figure towards the sky he spoke again.

"Ready all!" And when the bow came up, "Now!" in a ringing shout.

The men dipped their oars and pulled. Perched on the shoulder of the sea the boat rushed on towards the shore. The sound of the breakers filled Isabel's ears, and all about her the sea went mad, toppling, bouncing, tossing up in wild white spouts.

An eternity passed. Then, abruptly, she felt the boat's rush checked as if a great hand had seized the keel. Human figures appeared by magic, thigh-deep in the broken sea, grinning, shouting "Carney boy!" dragging the boat from the clutch of the backwash. Carney's stern mouth relaxed. He lifted his wife from the thwart. Operator Skane, turning for a moment from his efforts at the gunwale, saw his chief step into the sea and walk up the beach carrying a tall girl in his arms, like a Viking returning from a far raid with the captive of his choice.

Matthew set her down carefully above tidemark, in the scuffled sand where the stores were being piled. A group of women and children stood there. They greeted Carney with quick familiar smiles but their eyes were not for him. At once Isabel felt the concentrated gaze of Marina like the rays of a burning glass.



Matthew cried to the women, "Come and meet my wife!" in the joyous tones of a man who has indeed brought home a prize; and they came, slowly, shyly, with what seemed to her an intolerable curiosity in all their faces. They were gaunt and brown like their men, and they wore costumes of pre-war days. The heavy stuff of the skirts hung limp and full about their ankles, the jackets had padded shoulders and leg-o'-mutton sleeves, the hats were ludicrous. They belonged to a time that seemed to Isabel as remote as the moon.

For their part the island women stared as if Carney's wife herself had dropped from the moon. She was sharply aware of a modish skirt that barely covered her knees, of the high-laced grey-kid boots, and of the curved inches of silken leg so boldly revealed between the boot-tops and the skirt. She forgot that only a short time back she had considered the post-war styles ugly and immodest, as well as expensive, and now



she resented the astonishment of these women whose minds, like their clothes, remained moulded in the fashion of 1910.

"My dear, meet the ladies of Marina . . . Mrs. Jim Kahn of West Light . . . Mrs. Lermont of Number Two . . . Mrs. Giswell . . . Mrs. Nightingale . . . Mrs. Shelman" The names were lost at once. Their hands touched hers and fell away, and having made polite sounds and gestures they withdrew a little and with one accord turned their stares upon the active figures of their men. Matthew, with his arm about her waist, drew Isabel towards a trampled gap in the dunes. There a pair of shaggy ponies stood harnessed to a buggy.

At this point they were overtaken by a lean blue-jawed man whom Carney greeted cheerfully. "Skane! It's good to see you again! Isabel, my dear, this is Greg Skane—you know, the chap who's been running the show since I went off to the main." Isabel put out a languid hand,

and the newcomer gripped it briefly and turned to answer Carney's eager questions. Isabel had caught a glimpse of Skane in the rush of wet figures about the boat, and now she inspected in profile a rather tall man in sea-boots, stained duck trousers, and the shabby and patched jacket of a radio officer in the Canadian merchant marine.

He had no cap. His hair blew long and black in the wind. His eyes were of a dark blue, piercing when his gaze was direct. She guessed his age was thirty-five. He looked competent but she disliked him at once. The somewhat gaunt features wore a cynical expression that did not change when he glanced from Matthew to herself. He did not smile, even when greeting his chief.

She thought, *He's sorry to see Matthew back*. Her years of intimate acquaintance with radio-station politics up and down the seaboard told her that Skane must have hoped to continue permanently as Operator-in-Charge. No doubt it had seemed to him reasonable to suppose that Carney, after his long service on this lonely spot, had gone to the mainland looking for a post in civilization. And now, Carney had come back, and with a wife of all things! It must have been a blow.

Matthew helped Isabel into the buggy seat while Skane stowed and lashed their baggage behind. "I'll stay and check the stores," Skane said. "There's still a lot to come."

Matthew took up the reins and drove off along the beach, keeping just above the water where the sand was firm.

"Where is the road?" Isabel asked.

He chuckled. "There's no road on Marina. We use the beach all the time, except in high tides or storms. Notice the wheels—those wide iron tyres. Keeps 'em from sticking in the sand. All the wagons on Marina have wheels like that."

The dark ribbon of wet sand ran on for miles and was lost in the mirage to the east. On the right marched a rampart of dunes, a monotony of steep sands, and on the left the North Atlantic stretched away to the horizon, a gleaming blue desert speckled with white where the swells began to break on the shoals.

Above the dunes appeared the topmost section of the radio mast, a white wand held upright by taut wire stays, like a naked umbrella raised to the cloudless sky. Slowly the umbrella grew taller. The mast was revealed as three long wooden spars fastened one upon another like the

lower, top and topgallant masts of a ship. And now in each lull of the breeze Isabel could hear the pop-pop-pop of a petrol engine and then the high bugle note of the radio spark in quick staccato bursts. At each of these Matthew threw up his head, listening, smiling a little, and translating the dots and dashes for her benefit. The new op, young Sargent, was talking to the *Lord Elgin,* and she wondered at the pleasure in Matthew's face, not realizing that this was for him the very voice of home.

When the mast drew abreast, Matthew turned into a gully. The sea vanished and the murmur of the surf became faint and far. They passed under the island telephone line, a single wire carried over the dunes on a procession of staggering poles.

The gully came to an end and the buggy lurched over a steep dune; and there, without warning, lay the wireless station; the tall white mast, which now seemed to touch the sky, a small store shed and a rectangular bungalow of white clapboards, like a small wooden oasis in a desolation of sand and spire-grass. The island here was narrow, and at a distance of perhaps two hundred yards beyond the buildings Isabel saw an expanse of calm water screened from the northerly breeze by the dunes.

"The lagoon," Matthew said, with a flick of the whip. He pulled up the ponies outside a small porch at the end of the white building and helped Isabel down.

"My dear," he cried, "we're home!"

CHAPTER 9

ENTERING, Isabel found herself in a narrow hall from which a series of doors opened right and left. A powder of fine sand lay along the floor. Matthew threw open the first door on the left. A young man sat in a chair facing the east window, with a pair of phones clasped on his head. Before him a long table ran across the east side of the room, and upon it stood the receiving apparatus, two wooden boxes faced with ebonite and studded with knobs and dials. At his right hand lay the transmitting key with its thick brass shank and round black knob.

There was a black switchboard on the wall at his left with an imposing array of switches and voltmeters and ammeters. A small iron stove and three wooden chairs completed the furniture. The wooden floor

was bare, and badly worn by heavy boots grinding the all-pervading sand underfoot, so that the knots in the boards stood out like wens. Along the painted wainscot a row of hooks dangled clips of message forms. Devoid of beauty and of comfort, to Isabel the room reflected faithfully the sterile life of Matthew and the others. She could scarcely repress a shudder.

The man at the phones sat in a rigid attitude, gazing through the window with alert far-staring eyes as if he could see across the void to the lurching, creaking radio cabin of the ship to which he was listening. But he had seen the buggy draw up at the door, and suddenly, as if satisfied for the moment with that mysterious whisper in the phones, he turned and sprang out of his chair, slipping off one of the earpieces and looking towards the newcomers. Isabel saw that he was very young and shy. He could not have been more than eighteen. He had an oval, rather girlish face, and under the tan a quick flush spread as he met Isabel's eyes. His hair, like Skane's, was badly in need of the scissors. It hung in a brown mop on his neck and across his forehead. He wore an old navy jersey of heavy wool and a pair of shapeless trousers that once had been part of a naval uniform.

"Sargent," Matthew said briskly, "I want you to meet my wife." Sargent moved politely towards her, still listening with the other ear to the far-off voice in the air; and Isabel, noting the short length of the phone cord, stepped forward quickly and put out her hand. He shook it bashfully.

"Sargent, I'm the happiest man in the world," Carney cried, "and you can see why. Don't let us interrupt your work. I'm just showing Mrs. Carney her new home." They moved out into the hall. He pointed down the hall. "It ends at a partition, as you see. My—our apartment's on the other side, with a separate entrance. Those doors go to the men's quarters. This one here"—he threw open the door—"is the engine-room."

She peered inside obediently. The place reeked of hot oil. It had a concrete floor and in the midst of it a large single-cylinder petrol engine whirled a pair of flywheels. From one of these a long slatting belt led her eye to the generator, spinning and whining at the farther end of the room. Outside she heard the steady thudding of the engine exhaust.

Young Sargent, in that barren cell across the hall, began to talk in

dots and dashes to the ship that had so engrossed his attention when the Carneys arrived, and Isabel, standing on the greasy floor, was startled by a terrific sound as sharp, as deafening as rifle shots. The little engine-room was lit by a rapid succession of bright violet flashes that sprang, like the sound, from the revolving brass spark studs at the end of the generator shaft. The sound was frightful, like an enormous and explosive brass trumpet. Casting dignity aside, she fled into the hall and covered her ears with her hands. Matthew merely grinned.

"You'll get used to it," he declared calmly. "There's a muffling drum that fits over the spark disc but we leave it off—we have to file the studs clean and adjust the gap every day, sometimes two or three times a day."

"Do you mean to say," she demanded in a voice that sounded thin and strange in her singing ears, "that it goes on like that, day and night?"

"Only when the chap on watch is transmitting."

"But the transmitting goes on day and night—at intervals, I mean?"

"Oh, yes. As I say, you'll get used to it."

She did not reply. How could anyone sleep, even exist, with this erratic uproar shattering the silence of the station and of all the dunes within half a mile? And when she thought of days, weeks, months of it, she wondered how any of them kept from going mad. She was glad when Matthew led her outside and they passed along the plank walk to his own apartment.

As he opened the door to the kitchen, realm of the still unseen Vedder, she stepped in, expecting the worst. What she saw was somewhat reassuring. The floor had been swept of sand and scrubbed. The kitchen range had been freshly blackened and the kettles and pots scrubbed to a dull sheen.

"Not many stations are laid out like this, with a separate apartment for the chief operator," Matthew said with pride. "Of course, not being married, we've all hung about in here, when we were off watch. Vedder grumbles about having to step out of doors to get from the kitchen to his room."

Isabel drew open a cupboard door and saw tinned food of various kinds. There were bins for flour and potatoes.

"Getting low," he observed. "Tomorrow the wagon will bring up our stores. I wonder where Vedder is?"

There was a coal fire in the stove and a kettle murmured and faintly steamed. A worn sofa stood against the farther wall and there were four wooden chairs of the sort to be found in every fisherman's kitchen. There was a tier of stout shelves, evidently made from ships' planking, holding a great number of worn books whose titles ranged from *Complete Works of Byron* to *Practical Wireless Telegraphy,* and there were tins of tobacco, boxes of cartridges, playing cards, a pair of binoculars, a bottle of gun oil and other masculine bric-à-brac.

Above the couch hung a map in a wooden frame. She walked over and looked at it. There lay the island like a slim bean pod in the sea, surrounded by the names of ships neatly printed with a pen, and dates going all the way back to 1804.

"Those are all the known wrecks," Matthew said diffidently. "The lifesaving station was established in 1804, but the equipment was pretty poor in those days and there wasn't much they could do except salvage what they could from the wrecks and gather up the corpses on the beach."

"Where were the dead sailors buried?"

"Usually in the dunes where they were washed ashore. There are something like three hundred known wrecks and God knows how many others. You see bones sticking out of the sand quite often."

Isabel glanced out of the kitchen window at the dunes. She shivered in the warmth of the kitchen. Matthew said quickly, "Of course, we don't get many wrecks nowadays. When a skipper's in doubt now, he can get his bearings by radio from the new direction-finding stations on the main. What with that, and the improved depth-sounding gear, and the island lighthouses and wireless station, Marina's lost its old meaning altogether."

She changed the subject. "This is the living-room as well as the kitchen?"

"Yes, and the dining-room as well. The chaps will come in here to get their meals."

"It seems rather bare."

"I'll order some more furniture to come down on the next trip, if you like. Come and see the rest of it."

The bathroom was freshly painted white, and she was relieved to see modern sanitary fixtures, and a bath with hot and cold taps.

"We got these put in during the war when the navy was running the show. Before that things were pretty crude. Here's the bedroom."

Matthew stood aside, and she walked in with an odd flutter in her knees. She still felt miserable, and the sight of the plain iron bed gave her a longing to shut the door upon Matthew and lie down. A pair of skins on the floor, the soft white coats of young seals killed on the sea ice in the spring, lent the only touch of luxury to the room. There was a plain oak dressing-table whose mirror had gone dull with damp and time. There was a single chair. Her heart sank. It was all so bleak.

"Well?" he asked eagerly.

She answered in a cold voice, "I wish I'd known. I bought some sheets, an eider-down; but I could have got curtains, a few pictures for the walls, some chintz to cover the furniture—that kind of thing."

"Of course, you can order what you want by the next boat."

"Yes."

The *Lord Elgin* would not return for three months, an eternity. She could not keep the flat note from her voice and did not try. She turned away from him abruptly. "Matthew, I don't quite know how to say this, but I might as well be frank with you. I was in a hysterical state that night I met you so late—the night of the band concert. I was almost out of my mind. Since then, in that awful berth aboard the ship, I've gone through another nightmare and I'm horribly mixed up. You must give me time to get used to all this—and to you. I've known you so very little, after all."

She paused. Matthew said, "Yes?" quietly.

"Matthew, I want to sleep by myself. Not just tonight but until I feel more settled about everything. Do you mind?"

She continued to gaze out of the window, and she was relieved to hear his deep tone murmuring, "Of course not, my dear." He hesitated. "I said I'd ask nothing that you didn't want to give. I still mean that. And you've given me so much."

For a moment she was ravaged with remorse. The view of the lagoon dissolved in tears. She had to fight down a wild impulse to turn and fling herself into his arms and weep, as she had wept that embarrassing morning in his grubby little railway hotel.

"I wish you'd lie down a bit," Matthew said. "I'll hunt up Vedder. You'll feel better for something to eat."

She heard his retreating footsteps and the closing of the outer door. The bed invited her. She took off her hat and shoes, her skirt and jacket, and lay down, covering herself with a blanket. She closed her eyes and longed for sleep, but it would not come. The engine exhaust popped steadily and vagrant gusts of the sea breeze eddying along the lee side of the station brought through the open window a mingled smell of burnt petrol and the sea. At intervals the transmitter spark rang through the thin partitions like a trumpet and she could hear the continual whirr of the machinery. Her mind was filled with dismal reflections.

Then she heard Matthew's step. It occurred to her suddenly that she was hungry. When the bedroom door opened she at first saw nothing but the tray in Matthew's hand, the little mound of buttered toast and the steam rising from the cup of tea. But when she glanced at his face she sat up at once. "Something's wrong. What is it?"

His blue eyes were alight with something she had never seen there. It was anger. "Vedder's gone," he said. He came to the bed and placed the tray on her lap. She ignored it.

"What do you mean?"

"He's skipped. He waited till the coast was clear and then went off to the ship."

"But he can't do that, can he?"

"He's done it. Cooks are a law to themselves."

"Didn't he say anything or even leave a note?"

"He told young Sargent a good deal, but Sargent didn't know how to tell us. Vedder's always behaved as if he were doing us a favour by being here. When I sent word that you were coming, I don't suppose he liked it. Anyway, he told Sargent he wasn't going to put up with any of us once the ship came. And so he's gone. I'm sorry, Isabel, I hadn't meant to tell you all this but I'm angry. There's nothing to worry about. I'll get one of the lifesaving chaps at Main Station to come up and rustle the grub for us till we can get another cook on the next boat. Is your tea all right? Shall I get you some more toast?"

"The tea's lovely. I'll make myself some more toast by and by. I'm feeling better."

"I'm glad to hear that. I've got to get back to the landing and help Skane. While I'm there, I'll see about a chap to do the cooking and send him up."

Matthew turned away.

"Matthew! Wait a minute." She put the tray aside and sprang off the bed.

"Matthew, please don't bother about a cook. I can do as well as any man you'd pick up at Main Station."

"Oh, now, look here, my dear, I don't want you"

"Oh, don't be silly, Matthew! I must have something to do—I can't sit and twiddle my thumbs all day. Besides, isn't there an allowance of fifty dollars a month for the cook?"

"Oh, yes, but look here"

"Then I want the allowance. I know that on some stations the wife of the O-in-C does the cooking and collects the money."

Matthew regarded her steadily for a time and then nodded with the resignation of a long-married man, a gesture so absurd in view of the facts that Isabel was tempted to laugh. Away he went, and in a few moments she heard the slap of the reins and the faint grind of wheels in sand as he drove off towards the landing place. She moved into the kitchen, poured another cup of tea and made several pieces of toast. Her thoughts remained confused and unhappy, but in her new responsibility there was something clear to think about and she welcomed it.

She searched the cupboards and the kitchen drawers and at last found a much-thumbed cookery book, the secret bible of the departed Vedder. She glanced at the clock and saw that in an hour young Sargent would expect his dinner. Matthew and Skane would get theirs at Main Station. She examined the small stock of tins in the food locker and the rest was so easy that she was absurdly gratified. At twelve noon, promptly, she went along the plank walk and called to Sargent through the open window that his dinner was ready. And when he told her, shyly, that he could not leave the phones she brought the dinner to him on the very tray that Matthew had carried to the bedroom. With this accomplished she returned to the kitchen and ate a good meal herself. Now that the seasickness had gone she felt starved.

Finally, satisfied, she rummaged in her handbag for a cigarette and lay upon the bed, blowing out smoke slowly towards the ceiling. The racket of the transmitter had subsided for a time, indeed Sargent had stopped the engine itself in order to save petrol. The sea wind made a whispering sound in the sparse blades of the dune grass outside her

window. She had a strange sense of peace after storm. Now that it was settled that she should have a room of her own it seemed possible to resurrect a little of her old life. She saw the bedroom as another little citadel in which she could cherish her integrity, as she had regarded the room at Mrs. Paradee's. There was a mail-order catalogue in the kitchen. On the next boat she would get the things necessary to soften the harsh lines of the walls and furniture, to make the bedroom a nest to which she could retire and be Isabel Jardine as distinct from Mrs. Matthew Carney.

CHAPTER 10

WITHIN a week the station had settled into its new routine like the sand on the dunes after a flurry of wind from an unexpected quarter. As most of the food came in tins, even the butter, Isabel found the art of cooking simple. With the aid of Vedder's book, she managed to bake tolerable bread and biscuits and to achieve an occasional cake or pie. It was Matthew who showed her how to prepare chowder, and salt codfish fried with pork scraps or shredded and mixed with mashed potato and fried in cakes, and the simple dish of boiled salt herring and potatoes that he so strangely loved. He told her once, "I used to say, after I got away to sea, that herring-and-potatoes drove me away from Newfoundland; but there's been many a time since when I'd have given a day's pay just for a dish of 'em."

Each evening she made up his bed on the kitchen couch and in the morning, before the operators came in to breakfast, she whisked the bedding out of sight.

She felt entirely justified in her resolve to sleep alone but she had a dread that the operators would find out. She foresaw Skane smirking over it with young Sargent, uttering quips about the finicky bride and the unbedded groom; and to preserve the guilty secret further she put on, in their presence, a solicitude for Matthew's every want that pleased but rather puzzled him. He accepted her wifely smiles with a fond air, and sometimes, after the others had gone, he turned to her with an air of naïve expectancy that embarrassed her. But at his slightest advance the vivacity fled from her face, and she turned away briskly to some household task.

Commonly in stations where the chief operator had a wife he chose day watches, as was his right, leaving the others to divide the night between them. But Carney insisted on the old routine. Every third day he took the dreary "graveyard watch" from midnight to eight o'clock in the morning, and Isabel had the apartment to herself. After midnight the radio traffic subsided, and by three the operator of the watch was able to leave the phones and perform his other duty, filling the station water tank with monotonous strokes of a tall hand-pump in the engine-room.

Sometimes Isabel heard this at night, and she was astonished to learn from Matthew that all their water came from a pipe and filter thrust deep in the sand beneath the station.

"It's rain water, really. The dunes sop up rain like a big sponge and it settles down to sea level and sits on top of the saltwater table. That's why, wherever there's a deep hollow amongst the dunes, you find a fresh-water pond."

"The water you pump—it must come very slowly, through the sand like that. How long does it take to fill the tank each night?"

"An hour or two, usually."

"Why don't they let you have a motor-pump of some kind?"

Matthew grinned. "That's what Skane says, especially after a long session at the pump on a hot night. The engine heats the place like a Turkish bath."

"You should have told me. I've taken a bath every night."

"It doesn't matter."

She frowned. "It matters to the one who does the pumping."

"My dear, don't give it a thought."

But she did. Thenceforth, she was more careful with the taps.

The comparative calm of the graveyard watch, filling most of the night, was for Isabel a blessed chance to sleep. In spite of Matthew's assurance she could not get used to the great electric spark. The steady chugging of the engine was not so bad; indeed after a time it had a soporific effect. The uproar of the transmitter was another thing, especially at night. Frequently she was startled out of a deep sleep by the sudden crash of the spark. She sat up in the bed quivering at each terrific ripple of dots and dashes as if under the strokes of a whip.

Worst were the brief intervals of silence, and the waiting, knowing

that in a few moments, in two minutes, or an eternity of ten, the man listening at the phones would slip a hand to the key and release once more that screaming giant in the engine-room.

Always she found it impossible to get back to sleep, even when she heard the final blasting *dit-dit-dit da-dit-da,* the signal SK which meant the end of each transmission and which she soon came to recognize. With jangled nerves she sat on the edge of the bed, smoking cigarette after cigarette; or she lit the oil lamp and tried to read one of Matthew's old books.

One night after such an awakening, and feeling an intolerable restlessness, she thrust her bare feet into slippers, threw a coat over her shoulders and stole along the plank walk, where she could hear the steady booming of the surf.

At the north window she paused. Matthew sat in profile with the phones on, staring past the receiving apparatus with the curious intent gaze of a wireless operator at work. In the mellow glow of the paraffin lamps his bearded face was stern and alert. His strong figure sat erect with a pencil in the fingers, an image of watchfulness, of faith and duty. For the first time, curiously, she saw the romance of his profession. She was aware that a shore station watched over and controlled the sea radio traffic within its range, in the case of Marina an area of thousands of square miles; and she saw him now, the lone man in this remote outpost of the continent, listening, considering, weighing the voice of some ship far out in the enormous Atlantic. His right hand dropped the pencil and went to the key. Across the hall the whirling spark disc uttered a succession of maniacal screams. She pictured the engine-room windows lit with a blinding blue flash at each outcry, and the operator on the distant ship, a young man in blue and brass and twisted gold braid, listening in his turn for the far high bugle note that was for him not merely the voice of Marina but that of Canada itself.

She thought of going in, of chatting with Matthew for a time, but on second thoughts she turned away. She fled back to her bed feeling chilled but strangely elated, as if she had discovered a new freedom that still remained to be explored.

After this, on the warm September nights when she wakened and was restless, she stole out to enjoy the dark. It was exciting. Matthew had described the islanders as a superstitious people. He related with gusto

their tales of drowned women, walking about the dunes with hair hanging long and dank about their shoulders; of sailors in queer costumes visiting each other's graves; of a rider on a great white horse who roamed the island singing songs in French. Isabel had no fear of the dark and she found something comic in picturing what would happen if one of those credulous men, returning late from a visit to Number Two, say, and letting his pony seek its own way in the dark, should see her pale form gliding about the wireless station.

If Matthew was at the key, that shatterer of sleep, she went along the north side of the station and spied upon him with the mischievous feeling of a child peering over the banisters after being sent to bed. There was an odd fascination in watching him at work, so utterly unconscious of her presence. With the final crashing SK he put off the phones and walked across the hall to shut off the engine. She heard it wheezing to a stop amid the faint slapping of the generator belt, and then he was back again, putting on the phones, marking something on the long yellow log sheet with his enormous childish scrawl. Then he turned once more to his game of solitaire or his book, with the deliberation of a man who has a long dull night to kill.

Always the book appeared to be something immensely technical, with intricate diagrams, for it required the aid of an old-fashioned magnifying glass clutched in his right fist. He turned the pages slowly, holding the glass with the air of a bearded scientist searching for diminutive moulds among the leaves.

On wakeful nights when Matthew was not on watch but lay sleeping on his couch, she stole past him and went down to the lagoon. Fog was rare in these early autumn nights. Often there were fine displays of the Northern Lights, marching along the horizon like the shouldered spears of an army. Usually the sky was afire with stars. The star-gazing gave her a dizzy sensation of suspension between two worlds. And how true! she thought. What was the end to be? She did not know. And when she asked herself, What do I want? there was no answer.

After six weeks all sense of novelty had gone. Matthew's efforts to amuse her, his invitations to ride on ponyback, to sail down the lagoon in the dory for a bathe, she turned away with excuses. She was prepared to be bored and at times it seemed that she was determined to be bored, like those discontented ladies in Russian novels whom she had once

heartily despised. The operators were no longer strangers. Even her dislike for Skane had lost its pungency. She heard without interest their laconic conversations at meals or in the instrument-room.

Matthew had told her the story of the other operators' lives; and it seemed to her that all they had in common with each other or with her was imprisonment.

Skane's Christian name was Gregory and he came from a small seaport in Cape Breton where his father, a Methodist parson, lived in retirement.

Skane had got into a scrape at college and had gone off to sea as a wireless operator. The roving life suited him. He could drink his shipmates under the bar and walk away whistling. He had that lean vitality which defies the after-effects of alcohol and which seems irresistible to women. There had been a good many women, it appeared. ("Does he brag about them?" Isabel had asked, and Matthew had replied, "Never. I've heard it from chaps who'd sailed with him.")

Skane had served through the war in the merchant marine and had been torpedoed twice. After that he had applied for a post at Marina; and now at thirty-four he was beginning to be an old Marina hand. A good man, a little too short-spoken to be popular with the island folk, but a reliable operator.

And Sargent? Sargent had no story. Just a kid, a nice kid from Halifax. He was only eighteen and he'd been to sea for three years. Hated Marina, of course. Anxious to get away to sea. Only natural. He was young.

Matthew's "only natural" irritated Isabel. I'm young too, she thought rebelliously. It was all very well for Matthew and Skane. Skane was only a few years older than herself but then he was not "natural," it seemed. She watched him one day as they talked of the autumn duck-shooting. The first flocks had arrived from the north and soon the ponds and the coves of the lagoon would be black with birds. Isabel was appalled to learn that the men of Marina slew ducks by thousands every autumn and winter, of which only a few score came to the table.

"You get fed up with eating wild fowl after a time," Matthew explained. "At first it's a relief from tinned stuff and you eat a lot. But after that you'll take tinned meat or codfish chowder any time. By the end of November you're leaving most of the shot birds where they drop."

"What a frightful thing!"

She saw Skane's black eyebrows lift. He shot her one of those penetrating dark-blue glances which seemed to her so resolute and so cruel.

"After all, they're as thick as gulls, Mrs. Carney—and you've seen the gulls?"

"Would you shoot gulls for the fun of it?" she returned indignantly.

The three men looked at each other whimsically. "No," Skane said, "but, of course, the lifesavers do. They've usually got a gun across the saddle when they ride their patrols and they bang away at anything that strikes their fancy."

Young Sargent said, "One or two of 'em knock over a wild pony now and then—for the fun of it."

"You're joking!"

"It's true," Matthew said with resignation. "You find quite a few dead ponies among the dunes each year—especially in the spring. The old ones and the sick are bound to die in the winter weather. But now and again you see one with a bullet hole."

Isabel gasped. What sort of place was this, where men indulged such savage whims? Again she had that vision of small stations isolated among the dunes, where men and women lived bored to the edge of insanity in the midst of the inscrutable sea.

She thought upon these things when, awakened by the remorseless spark at night, and with rain and flung sand beating on her bedroom window under the thrust of the autumn gales, she lay sleepless in her bed. It was impossible to go forth on one of those nocturnal prowls. She stirred, turning hopelessly from side to side, caught up in the squirrel-cage of her thoughts.

Memories of her night with Matthew in the little railway hotel began to come back strongly and warmly now, and the hideous disillusionment of the ship had lost its sting. She was in a dilemma of her own making. Having drawn an invisible but rigid screen about herself, all mixed up somehow with her pride, she could not bring herself to throw it down. As night succeeded night, lonely, hearing the slash of the storm along the walls and roof, she began to wish fervently that Matthew were more like the other islanders, forceful, even cruel in the satisfaction of his whims and desires. But Matthew did not ask what she was now so ready again to give.

CHAPTER 11

OCTOBER brought the wild fowl from the north, and frequently wild gales from the south-east. The surf on the beaches reached a violence that Isabel found thrilling and terrible. It was weird to sit in the watch-room, to hear a great sea break on the invisible north beach, and to see the oil quiver in the glass bowls of the lamps. Great waves in ranks like grey-clad regiments marched up from the south, moving with ponderous discipline to the beach. Along the whole length of Marina their assaults filled the air with the boom of a cannonade.

Whenever Matthew had the graveyard watch, Skane and Sargent set off with their guns, each carrying half a dozen decoys slung in a bag of old fishnet on his back. Most of the birds they shot were black duck. To Isabel they had a fishy reek and taste that defied the arts of her cookery book. The men devoured the roast duck with gusto, but as the days went on, the gusto slackened, as Matthew had foretold. The gunners brought back less and less of their spoil, and at last none at all. But the hunting went on. Revolted at the waste, Isabel cried once at Matthew, "What a crime! A cruel senseless crime!"

"It's something to do on Marina."

She sniffed. "Must a man have something to do?"

"Most men, yes. You'll understand after a time."

"What about women?"

He was making a pencil note on the log sheet with that abstract air she had come to recognize in the operator on watch, with his body in the room and his mind five hundred miles away.

"Women? Oh, most of them have youngsters. Gives 'em lots to do."

"And the children—what do they do?"

Matthew knitted his brows. "Nothing much. Most of 'em learn to ride a pony as soon as they can walk almost, and they gallop about. The boys soon learn to shoot ducks."

"I should have thought there'd be a school for the children."

"You can't expect things like that on Marina, we're too far from anywhere. School, doctor, church—all that kind of thing we have to get along without."

"What happens when a woman has a baby, say?"

He stirred uneasily. "Usually she goes off to the mainland on the first boat before her time is due. Some don't, of course. Mrs. Giswell, at Number Three, has five children, all born right there."

"Who looked after her?"

"Mrs. Nightingale rode down from Number Four, except for the last one."

"And who then?"

"Giswell himself. He turned up at Main Station next day on pony-back. Cheerful as a cricket and proud as Punch."

Isabel picked up her knitting. She was irritated by Matthew's unconcern. The more she learned of life on Marina the more it seemed a tale of another time. The presence of the wireless station and the occasional smoke of a liner passing hull down on the transatlantic run made the situation all the more grotesque. When, therefore, a day or two later Matthew suggested a visit to Main Station, she refused with the indifference of one who already has seen more than she wishes to remember. He looked embarrassed. "I wish you'd go," he urged. "I wasn't supposed to tell you but it's a sort of party in your honour."

"What on earth do you mean?"

"Mrs. McBain rang up on the phone last night and said that today would be an occasion—the end of your second month on Marina—and she'd like me to bring you down. She's gone to quite a bit of trouble, baking a lot of fancy stuff, and Jim Kahn's bringing his wife in from West Light, and the Lermonts are riding up from Number Two. Oh, yes, and Skane's coming down in the evening to give us a bit of music. Do say yes."

He looked so anxious that she had not the heart to refuse. After preparing supper for Skane and Sargent she bathed and changed. Matthew put on his grey suit and the smart Halifax hat.

"I'll phone Main Station and get them to send up the buggy."

"I'd rather walk," Isabel said. "It's only a mile, after all, and I'd like the exercise."

It was a bright October afternoon with a warm breeze from the south-west. The winds had been light for two days and the surf on the shore had a muffled note. On their left lay the glittering surface of the lagoon, and on the farther side Matthew pointed out a few seals sunning themselves on the bar.

The West Light pointed skyward far ahead. Nearer at hand, on top of the north dune, they could see the red watchtower of Main Station. The small beach birds had departed southward for the winter but the herring gulls remained, and the great black-backed gulls which the islanders called "preachers;" and here and there a few belated terns, known on Marina as "steerns," flitted overhead uttering the thin harsh cry which seemed to Isabel the very voice of this desolation.

"Where are the wild ponies?" Isabel asked.

"They seldom wander west of the wireless-station. East of us where the island's much wider you'll see 'em about the freshwater ponds where the grass grows well and they can drink."

He turned off the lagoon shore and in a few minutes they came upon a wide circular hollow in which half a dozen wooden buildings lay sheltered like a toy village hidden in a bowl.

"Here we are," Matthew said. "That white house with the wind gauge on the roof is McBain's. He's Superintendent of the island establishment—commonly known as the Governor. Over there's the stable. They keep about a dozen ponies to haul the wagons and for beach patrols and so on. Nearest building to our right is the rocket-house. Then there's the boat-house. Finally there's the crew-house, where the lifeboatmen live, all single chaps, or at any rate chaps without wives on Marina. The sheds behind are just for stores of various kinds."

The Governor's house was a trim place newly painted in white, with the doors and window frames a dark chocolate brown. Mrs. McBain threw open the door as they came up the steps.

"Come right in!" she cried. She was a small woman in her sixties, with thin snowy hair done in a tight little bun. Her smile was broad and it revealed a set of ill-fitting false teeth, the upper of which had a disconcerting trick of slipping down whenever she opened her mouth.

Isabel found herself in a small parlour furnished like every village parlour from Cape Sable to Cape Breton. There was a black horsehair sofa, a pair of high-backed rocking-chairs with antimacassars, and two sedate horsehair arm-chairs, one of which—evidently the Governor's—had a large brass spittoon beside it.

Upon the walls hung group photographs showing lifeboat crews of other years, strapping men with formidable beards, the heroes who had made Marina famous in the days of sailing ships, when wrecks were

many, and when the pick of Nova Scotia manhood could be had for thirty-five dollars a month and all found.

Only one note was strange. In place of the customary small harmonium, there was a piano, an exquisite thing of rosewood, with polished-brass candle-brackets at each side of the music rack, which held a worn collection of Chopin's *Etudes*.

Mrs. McBain saw Isabel's interest. "My daughter's," she explained. "She took lessons as a girl. But she marrit a Hudson Bay factor and went off to live in the Ar'tic where you can't take anything much bigger than a fiddle. Do you play, Mrs. Carney?"

"No, I wish I could. I love music. So did your daughter, I should say." She pointed to the Chopin on the rack.

"Oh, that! That's Greg Skane's. It's queer stuff. We like it better when he plays the kind of thing our Lizzie used to play—'Over the Waves,' and 'Juanita' and all that. We'll have a rare old sing-song by and by."

McBain came in, a thick-set man with a round face brown and wrinkled like a withered potato. He was dressed in a cotton shirt and his best blue serge, an evident concession to Mrs. McBain; but nothing had persuaded him to put on a collar or a tie. On introduction he put out the hand of a seaman reared in the days of sail, with short thick fingers bent as if ready at any moment to clap on to a rope. He announced, "Pleased to meet you, ma'am," in a powerful voice, and grinned and struck Carney a blow with his fist.

"She'll do," he declared.

"You take them out and show 'em round," his wife commanded, "whilst I lay the table and get on with my cooking."

CHAPTER 12

ISABEL went forth with the two men submissively but without interest. At the stables they walked into a warm gloom where two cows and eight or ten ponies stood in a range of stalls, all named after personages famous during the First World War.

"We catch a bunch of ponies every autumn," McBain explained. "It's fun alive, I tell you. We always pick out one or two likely ones to break in for ourselves and the rest we ship off to Hal'fax on the autumn boat."

He jerked a thumb at a row of saddles hanging from pegs. "You must learn to ride, ma'am. You'll enjoy it. You take Marshal Fotch or Lide-Jarge, all kind as kittens and used to women on their backs. I often send Lide-Jarge to the West Light for Miz Kahn to come and have a cup of tea."

"You see?" Matthew turned to her and smiled.

"I'll think about it," she answered, but with so much doubt in her tone that McBain gave his head a shake and passed on.

"Not much to see here," he declared, opening the door and pointing out boxes of rockets, coils of rope, breeches buoys and Lyle gun. Isabel lent him a polite ear until, her eyes getting used to the dim light, she saw a row of skulls, each the colour of old ivory and polished by the sands in which they had long lain. The shadowed eye sockets regarded her with a concentrated stare and the teeth had that chilling suggestion of a grin which is the final mockery of human existence. She sprang back.

"They can't bite," McBain said, amused.

"What are those horrible things doing here?"

"Oh, the boys see one, now and again, riding their patrols on the dunes, and bring it in for the collection. Bones, too. Few years ago some of the boys found a man's shank bone and foot complete, with a wooden shoe on it. Brought it in—it's here somewhere." He peered into a barrel. "Ah!"

Isabel shrank away. "I'd rather not see it, Mr. McBain. Really! Shall we go on and look at the other buildings?"

Outside, she drew in a deep breath of the sunny air. She could not help saying in a shocked voice, "Why couldn't they have left those poor things where they were?" McBain answered indifferently, "Oh, just something to do." She frowned and walked on. But she was no longer bored.

The boat-house proved the most interesting part of Main Station. The interest was not in the pair of surfboats nor the big lifeboat perched on its carriage, ready to be dragged by ponies to any part of the beach, but in an array on the walls. McBain explained that the "boys" had always tried to salvage a "nameboard" from each wreck; and here they were. It was a strange collection. Some were whole bow or stern planks bearing the ship's name in crumbled gilt; some had elaborate scrolls at each end, some were merely stencilled letters on part of a boat strake.

"I guess," McBain said, "you've seen that map in the wireless station with all the names of the wrecks. Of course, there's a lot we don't know about. Marina had a bad name in the old times. Some queer yarns—pirates, wreckers, all that. People used to come here from the main, sealers, chaps after walrus, and find bodies lying about the beach stripped of everything—women with their fingers cut off to get the rings—all that. 'Course a Marina yarn don't shrink with the telling. You don't know how much to believe. Ghosts, I mean to say. I'm not superstitious myself. Nor's Matt, eh? Your husband walks about the beach at night—you know that, I daresay. Something very few of my boatmen would do, I tell you."

As they walked back across the grassy hollow to McBain's house, Kahn and his wife came riding over the rim of the hollow from the west. The West Light keeper was a brown man of middle size with a mild clean-shaven face. His wife was more remarkable, a rather lean woman, taller than her husband. Her face, long and yellow, was lit by a pair of fierce green eyes that gave Isabel the impression of a farm cat gone wild and peering at her from the top rail of a pasture fence.

She sat astride like a man, with her cumbrous petticoats tucked about her lean knees. As the pony came half-leaping, half-sliding down the sandbank a great hat flapped its brim faithfully at every leap. *There,* thought Isabel ironically, *go I in ten more years.*

There were loud greetings, and while they were all shaking hands the Lermonts appeared in a buggy lurching over the rim of the hollow from the direction of the north beach. Inside the McBains' parlour, they inspected each other carefully. The Lermonts were younger than the Kahns. Lermont, whose wife addressed him as Charlie, was a tall fellow in the late twenties with a strong-jawed face and large light-grey eyes. Mary Lermont was twenty-five. She was island-born, one of the Giswells at Number Three.

Conversation proved much easier than Isabel had expected. She had only to ask a question about island life and she could relax and hear an answer compounded of all the voices in the room, but chiefly of Mrs. Kahn's. The lightkeeper's wife talked in a loud voice approaching a scream. In spite of her sallow features and bony person she gave an impression of great vitality, and it was clear that she was the ruler of West Light. She told a story of several years before when her husband and

Joe, his assistant, fell ill with ptomaine poisoning. She had felt ill herself but she was able to get about, and for six consecutive nights she had clambered up the steps of the lighthouse to rewind the mechanism that revolved the great mirrors round the lamp. The weights ran down every three hours and it took five hundred turns of the crank to bring them up to the top again.

"But," cried Isabel, "you have a phone—why didn't you ask Mr. McBain to send someone to help?"

"What!" screamed Mrs. Kahn. "And have one 'o those fellers from the crew-house messin' about our light?" She threw herself back in the chair, slapping her knees and sweeping the room with that restless and furious stare. And everybody smiled and nodded as if the notion of anybody but Martha Kahn climbing those endless winding stairs and cranking the heavy weights were too funny for words.

The talk went on. They were eager to tell Isabel all about Marina, and when they moved to the adjoining dining-room the flow of gossip continued over the food. Isabel found a keen relish in both. The people at Main Station lived well. They kept hens and had fresh eggs, the cows provided milk and butter. From time to time McBain and some of his men went off in a surfboat and caught a supply of codfish and halibut. The dish of the evening was, in fact, baked halibut, served with a sauce of thick cream and chopped hard-boiled eggs, and garnished with potatoes and turnips and parsnips grown on the island. For dessert there was a shortcake, with a rich flood of wild strawberries, picked and preserved by Mrs. McBain in the summer past.

When the company removed once more to the parlour and Skane appeared, Isabel sat back in her chair with the comfortable feeling of one who has been well fed. Skane wore the soiled duck trousers, the sea-boots, the worn radio-officer's jacket with the frayed sleeve braid that she had seen him wearing so often. He was shaved and his hair was combed to a thick gleaming fall at the back of his neck; but she was a little indignant that he had made no effort to dress for the party.

She was surprised to see him falling into animated conversation with the Kahns and Lermonts. She remembered Matthew saying that the island people disliked him, considering him "uppity." And now he was entering into the cross talk with easy energy, sending the ebullient Mrs. Kahn into screams of mirth with some quip about sidesaddles, rallying

McBain about the quirks of the island telephone system, telling a good duck-shooting joke against himself. When Mrs. McBain demanded a sing-song, he went to the piano and struck up "Old MacDonald Had a Farm." It was getting dark and McBain lit the paraffin hanging-lamp and the candles on the piano. The company clustered about the pianist and sang with gusto. Skane had a rather good tenor, McBain and Kahn and Lermont sang loudly if off key, Mrs. Kahn screamed happily, young Mrs. Lermont disclosed a strong sweet voice. Now she heard that sound made famous by the operators' tales all over the coast, Carney's rich baritone ringing above the others and through the room.

Skane went on to "Juanita," with young Mrs. Lermont singing the verses and everyone coming in on the chorus, and then to "Old Black Joe." For variation he played a few shanties, and Isabel was amused at the vigour of McBain and Matthew, roaring out the words as if the parlour floor had become a deck and there really were sails to haul.

After an hour they were all hoarse and there was a movement back to the chairs. Skane remained at the piano, smoking a cigarette and turning the worn leaves of Chopin. He put out the cigarette carefully and began to play one of the *Etudes*. Mrs. McBain leaned across to Isabel, whispering, "This is what he really comes for. The rest was just to please us."

The Kahns and Lermonts regarded the man at the piano with the faintly bored faces of those for whom the best part of the evening had gone by, and soon the men were looking at their watches. Kahn muttered something about "seeing to the light," and at ten o'clock the Kahns and Lermonts left. Matthew looked at Isabel with the uplifted brows of a husband who expects the wifely signal to go home; but she was sitting relaxed in one of the arm-chairs and her eyes were closed. Skane was not an accomplished pianist but he played well. His lean, sinewy fingers sprang over the keys and his gaunt jaw in the twin lights of the piano candles was serious and taut.

There was something oddly familiar in his attitude on the stool, the strong figure tense, the eyes dreamy and yet alert. It occurred to Isabel that it was the characteristic attitude of radio-men, their hands busy before them, their eyes on something miles beyond.

A sudden crash of keys in discord startled them all, and Skane sprang from the stool. "Good Lord, what time is it?"

McBain drew a huge silver watch from his waistcoat. "Half-past eleven."

"And I've got the graveyard trick!" Skane turned, pulling on his battered sea-officer's cap, and gave Isabel a gesture that was not so much a bow as a quick jerk of his head and shoulders. Then with a "So long!" to Carney and the McBains he was off, slamming the door and running down the steps.

"Does he always go like that?" Isabel asked, amused.

"Pretty much," Mrs. McBain replied. "Wakes up, like, then he's off."

"He seemed almost human tonight. He's usually glum."

Mrs. McBain pushed up her spectacles and rubbed her eyes. She yawned.

"He's a queer sort. Never seems happy but when he's here. Comes down quite often and plays by the hour. I daresay it's something to do."

Isabel twisted her lips. "Well, we must be going ourselves."

"I'll bring round the buggy," McBain said, rising.

"No, I'd rather walk, wouldn't you, Matthew?"

Matthew hesitated.

"In the dark?" cried Mrs. McBain.

"Oh, but I love the dark, Mrs. McBain, and so does Matthew. It won't take long. The walking's very good by the lagoon."

Outside she took his arm and they walked slowly. The stars were out and the dunes in the cold light had the look of dead mountains on the moon. Matthew seemed absorbed in her presence and the intimacy of her hand on his arm. He looked straight ahead and stumbled frequently over bits of raffle on the sand. After a long silence Isabel asked idly, "Why didn't Skane wait for us?"

"He had to catch his watch—I venture he's run the whole way. Skane's as hard as nails."

She laughed. "You're all as hard as nails."

The wireless-station lights appeared. They could hear the engine and in another few moments a harsh fanfare of the spark. When they reached the door the wind was blowing, whipping sand in their faces and harping in the wires overhead. It was a relief to step into the warmth of the apartment, where the kitchen fire still glowed. Isabel went straight to the bedroom, lit the lamp and drew the blind. In the bathroom she ran the bath deep and let herself into the hot water with the satisfaction of one

who has accomplished a far journey. She was sitting before the mirror in her dressing-gown, brushing her hair when Matthew came, in shirt and trousers, and found her door open. He gave an apologetic knock on the jamb. "Isabel, you forgot to put out my bedding. Just let me have it and I'll make up my berth."

She put the brush aside and rose, turning slowly to face him. Her skin was flushed and to Carney in the mild glow of the lamp she was a vision of beauty.

"I didn't forget. Matthew, I've been an idiot but that's over now."

"I'm afraid I don't understand."

Isabel put up a hand to the lamp and turned it low. Her bare feet on the sealskins carried her like a wraith across the room, and without warning she was before him with her hands upon his shoulders.

"You'll never understand, my poor darling, and I can't explain. I'm not sure I know myself. Do you love me still?"

He made no answer. He stood trembling and she felt in him a yearning that brought tears to her eyes. She put her mouth to his, and at the quick passionate pressure of his arms she wept, drooping in his embrace as if her bones had fled. Outside, the gale blew on. The building shook; it seemed to blench before the stronger gusts, and the keening in the aerials rose to a witches' chorus as if all the ghosts of Marina had found voice about the mast.

Later, wakeful while Matthew slept with one unconscious arm about her, Isabel heard the dreary clanking of the water-pump. Skane was at the task they all hated, stripped and sweating in the hot reek of the engine-room. She thought of her bath guiltily. But she drifted into sleep with a faint smile on her lips. There was something entertaining in the notion of Skane, the moody anchorite, sweating an extra half-hour at the pump for the pleasure of a woman.

CHAPTER 13

NOVEMBER brought the first snow, a few specks wandering down from a sullen sky and then a brisk fall that covered the dunes and the south bar. Below the dark ceiling the sea moved in sluggish grey folds, and when the sun put down a thin ray the wet foreshore had a hard grey shine like steel.

Most of the wild fowl had moved on, and the gunners from Main Station ceased their visits. Skane and Sargent themselves gave up after one chilly dawn when they returned with a pair of draggled ducks and a tale of tossing a coin to see who should strip and swim out to retrieve them. Isabel shuddered.

"Suppose you'd got cramp?" she demanded. "Surely enough people have been drowned on Marina without you and Sargent taking silly chances like that. Don't you agree, Matthew?"

"He can't," Skane said, grinning. "He's done it too often himself. Eh, Matt? Tell your wife about the bet you took, that you'd go for a swim off the north beach last Christmas."

"I don't believe it!" she cried.

"Well, it's true," Matthew said sheepishly. "And it cost Skane half a pound of tobacco."

"But why? And don't say it was just for something to do!"

"How did you guess?" Skane said.

ALL Marina awaited now the coming of the *Lord Elgin* with the winter stores and mail. "The Boat" was the unfailing topic in every conversation. One wife rang up another and they chattered over items in their well-thumbed mail-order catalogues. These conversations were public affairs, for like any farm wife on a party-line every woman on Marina ran swiftly to take down her receiver, whatever number had been rung. There she listened, throwing in a comment of her own if she felt inclined. This diverting custom was not for Isabel, even had she wished, for the wireless station was not connected with the main island line. Isabel could chat on the phone with Mrs. McBain and no one else. The main island line, skirting her abode on its drunken and sandblasted poles, seemed to emphasize the apartness of that still-mysterious creature, "Carney's woman."

She and Matthew went often to Main Station now. The people east of Number Two were too far to join these petty social affairs, but the Kahns came always, and usually the Lermonts, and often a few of the lifeboat crew slipped into the parlour and sat regarding Isabel with sidelong eyes.

At Matthew's insistence Isabel had begun to ride, wearing a pair of trousers and seated on Lide-Jarge, a resigned and steady-going beast.

When Matthew had a watch to keep on a fine afternoon she rode forth with Sargent and sometimes even Skane, crossing the island by a labyrinth of ravines and ponds, where the ponies' hoofs crushed ripe red cranberries underfoot, and returning along the shore of the lagoon.

Sargent rode with the cheerful awkwardness of a sailor a-horseback, but Skane and Carney sat their mounts like centaurs. She admired the reckless grace with which they rode. Matthew afoot had no grace at all. At times he was downright clumsy, especially at evening before the lamps were lit, when he blundered about like a man in a dream. In the saddle he was another creature, quick, sure, and somehow pitiless like Skane.

With the approaching date of the autumn boat, McBain arranged a pony hunt. Isabel rose and dressed before dawn to give Matthew and Skane their breakfast, and saw them ride off at first light with McBain and his troop towards the east, trailing grotesque long shadows over the dunes.

They would extend a living line across Marina and sweep towards the west, driving the herds before them with whoops and shouts. At first it would be easy, for the island was narrow at its ends; but there would be some lively work towards the centre where the expanse of dunes and gullies thickened to a mile. There were perhaps three hundred wild ponies on Marina, living in small herds, each dominated by a stallion and grazing over a section of grassy dunes and reedy ponds from which it rarely strayed.

All of these would be driven together in the chase, a brown mêlée of flying hoofs and long tossing manes, doubling back cunningly along hidden ravines. Many would thus escape the roundup, especially in the wide part of the island where McBain's twenty riders were nearly a hundred yards apart.

Soon after noon, watching from the window of the instrument-room, Isabel and Sargent saw about two hundred wild ponies rushing over the dunes towards the concealed pen in the hollow before Main Station, with its wide funnel of extended posts and wire. Then appeared the line of riders, urging their blown mounts with sticks and whips of knotted rope.

Skane galloped past on a frothing, wild-eyed pony, giving them a smile and a toss of his whip. Towards the lagoon, Matthew and three

or four others rode shouting at a cluster of ponies stealing back along the shore.

Isabel was astonished. She would not have believed that such a number of ponies could exist in that apparently empty wilderness. Indeed all of it was fantastic: the active bronzed men in trousers and seaboots, in jerseys and ragged mackinaws, on horseback; the yells and whoops which she supposed were an imitation of American cowboys.

Most incongruous of all was a slim youth in trousers and mackinaw shirt, with long dark hair flittering about his shoulders, who dashed to head off a pair of ponies breaking back past the wireless station. The ponies turned and fled with the rest towards the trap a mile beyond, and the rider reined up violently at the very edge of the plank walk, giving Sargent a flashing smile before galloping on.

"Who on earth is that?" Isabel demanded.

"That," Sargent said with pleasure in his voice, "is Giswell's daughter from Number Three."

"Not the belle of the island!"

"Yes."

"Is that the girl you go down to Number Three to see?"

"Yes." He smiled and reddened. The riders dwindled in the distance towards Main Station.

"She seems rather wild."

"She rides awfully well," Sargent said, as if that explained everything.

"Does she always look like that?" Isabel asked.

"Pretty much. I mean, she usually wears trousers and a man's shirt. But she dresses up very nicely sometimes—even powders her nose. Not for me, of course."

"Then who does she powder her nose for?"

"You'd never guess."

Sargent had the phones on, and he left the window to make his fifteen-minute entry on the log sheet.

"You're making me curious, Sargent. Who?"

"Skane."

"No!"

"It's the truth, Mrs. Carney. Quaint, isn't it?"

"You don't mean Skane makes love to that—that child?"

"Oh, no, not a bit of it. He likes all the Giswells and Sara's the eldest

of the kids. Skane's friendly to her but mostly he plays with the young ones. He's an odd sort, I suppose you know that."

"Matthew said Skane disliked women. That's true, isn't it?"

"I wouldn't know. He never mentions 'em, not to me anyway."

"He's not good-looking. What does Sara see in him?"

Sargent grinned. "That's what we'd all like to know. He scarcely gives her a word and yet he's the only man on Marina as far as she's concerned. If you'll forgive me, women are funny."

"That's quite true. Don't you think I'm rather funny myself?"

He blushed again. "Not at all."

He was so naïve that she could not resist pressing the point.

"Didn't it occur to you and Skane that it was rather odd, Matthew getting himself a wife so suddenly?"

"No," he said, unconvincingly.

"Tell me, Sargent—Jim, may I call you Jim?—what did Skane say?"

"Oh, nothing."

"Tell me!"

"Well, he thought it was a nuisance. I mean, we'd been living in a free and easy fashion. Shaving once a month, or something like that. Letting our hair grow. Skane hated to give that up. And then we wondered what sort of person you'd be."

"And what sort did you find me?"

"Very nice."

"And Skane?"

"He doesn't say. He was rather jealous, I think."

"Heavens! Of me?"

"Well, he and Carney had been very chummy. They were always together, riding, swimming, gunning, sailing. When Carney's message about you came, Skane was very upset."

"If Skane didn't like it, why didn't he ask for a transfer?" Isabel demanded. "He could have got one easily enough. He's served here two or three years."

Sargent gave her a quick side glance. "I wondered that myself. Probably a feeling on Skane's part that he'd be letting Carney down if he left. He's awfully loyal to your husband."

"In spite of Matthew's wife?"

"Skane's got used to you now, I think. He's accepted you as part of

Carney, and that makes you all right." Sargent smiled engagingly. "You know, it wasn't much of a life here before. You changed that. The food —everything's better. You seemed a bit strange at first—sort of stand-offish. You're different now. I think we're all different. It's really a good thing you came."

"That," exclaimed Isabel, "is the nicest thing I've heard since I landed! Now let me tell you something, Jim. When I saw the station, how lonely it was, and so noisy and bare, I didn't see how I could stick it till the next boat. Then one day everything looked different. Suddenly I was happy. I'm still happy."

Sargent grinned again. "Oh, Marina's not so bad. I'll be glad to leave, mind you, because I want to get back to sea. But Marina could be worse. It could be some frozen hole in the far North. When I think of Labrador I congratulate myself. Here on Marina at least we get mail and fresh grub several times a year."

"And there's always Sara," she teased.

"Unfortunately, there's always Skane."

"I suppose." It was odd how the talk came back to Skane. "Well, if that girl's as mad about him as you say, why doesn't she find some excuse to see him here? I would, in her place."

"Oh, she used to come here a lot—all the time."

"Why doesn't she come any more?"

"She does sometimes, but only when you're not here."

"Oh? Why?"

"She doesn't like you."

"But she's never seen me!"

"She saw you on the beach, the day you landed."

Again the memory of the landing place, the staring women in outlandish clothes, the air of instinctive hostility. Sara must have been one of those busy trousered figures about the boat.

Isabel returned to her kitchen to prepare the belated dinner. Poor Sargent! She felt not the slightest qualm over the way she had pumped that artless youth. I must talk to him more, she decided. I've not been curious enough about their comings and goings. That business of Skane and the girl from Number Three for example.

It was like Matthew not to have mentioned it. But how strange—and how interesting!

CHAPTER 14

THE PEOPLE who most loudly profess a love of the sea are seldom the ones who live at grips with it. The people of the North Atlantic islands, where the winds are strong and the waters cold, have no illusions about the sea. It is their enemy.

The inhabitants of Marina, entrenched in their barren ravines like a beleaguered garrison, climbed the ramparts daily now to watch for a sign of relief. At last it came, for even the North Atlantic must grow weary now and then. Matthew sent the message himself, and smiled at a vision of O'Dell grumbling over the familiar SEA GOING DOWN BAROMETER THIRTY WIND LIGHT NW EXPECT GOOD LANDING CONDITIONS MORNING.

The weather held. When Isabel walked with Matthew and Sargent to the landing place in the first streaks of sunrise the surf barely splashed on the beach. "You could land in a canoe," Carney said. The *Lord Elgin* appeared far out, rounding the tip of the west bar, coming in at half speed and anchoring a safe mile from the beach. A bleak wind searched the beach and Isabel shivered in spite of her trousers and jerseys. She admired the fortitude of the island women, dressed in their quaint Edwardian fashions, determinedly feminine and decorous, even to those preposterous hats. Mrs. Kahn was there, shouting in her penetrating voice, and Mrs. Giswell, Lermont's wife and the others, less familiar and more constrained with "Carney's woman."

Captain O'Dell came ashore in the second boat, muffled in a bridge coat, wearing a black fur cap and mittens. He greeted the men and whacked Carney on the back. Then he passed up the beach to the women, shaking hands with each one, gravely and courteously calling them by name. Suddenly Isabel knew why they dressed up for these occasions. To them the Department of Marine and Fisheries was a thing all-powerful and remote, to be worshipped afar, the God from whom all blessings flowed, while Captain O'Dell was the Department's prophet, who came three or four times a year to deliver them from want, to hear their supplications and complaints, and to receive their respect, which to Isabel seemed curiously like worship. When O'Dell came to Isabel there was a glint of curiosity in his sunken blue eyes.

"Well, Mrs. Carney, how does it go?"

"Very well, Captain," she returned calmly.

"D'you know, when I saw you go over the side last sumíner I felt sorry for you?"

"I felt sorry for myself—then."

"Um! Marina's done you good! You're another woman."

"A bit of tan makes a lot of difference," she laughed; but she felt uneasy under that old shrewd gaze. What was he thinking?

She would have been mortified had she known. To O'Dell, Carney's bride had seemed a rather frigid creature in those brief glimpses on the voyage to Marina. It couldn't last, he had told himself; and all the way from Halifax on the present trip he had expected a radio message from Marina saying that Mrs. Carney would be a passenger on the return.

Now he beheld the young woman still cool and self-possessed but changed in some vital way. She looked—he searched his mind for the word. Awakened? Ripened? Something like ripened. Three months of marriage had transfigured the pale spinster as three months of sunshine would transfigure a fruit long in the shade. O'Dell said to himself: she's taken to marriage like a duck to water; thinks she's married some kind of god and that makes Marina some kind of heaven. His glance strayed down the beach to Carney's big figure. By Jove, she might be right at that! Carney *is* some kind of god. It came suddenly to O'Dell that this slim grey-eyed young person before him had known an experience that a lot of other women would have envied or at any rate admired. He gave her another shrewd glance, a nod of congratulation and approval, and then passed on for a word with young Mrs. Lermont. Isabel tramped stiffly over the dunes to the sheltered hollow of Main Station and the warmth of Mrs. McBain's blue-painted kitchen.

"Hello," said that busy woman. "Everything ashore?"

"All but the mail." Isabel opened her lammy coat and spread her numb hands to the glow of the stove.

"And you didn't wait for it?"

"It was awfully cold," Isabel said straightly.

"What you want is a nice hot cup o' tea. Pull up a chair to the stove and put your feet in the oven—all my baking's done."

Isabel obeyed. She had not told Mrs. McBain the whole truth. The final chill that drove her from the beach had been a sudden realization

that she had nothing more to wait for. She felt a sharp and unexpected envy of the island women, who had friends over the horizon to write them letters. But when Matthew and Sargent came at last with the wireless-station mail she had a surprise, a letter for herself, and from Miss Benson of all people.

"Just a line to say hello," it ran, "and hope you're getting on all right. You gave us a fine shock. Hurd was *furious*. You always were a quiet one but frankly I'd never have guessed that you were up to anything like capturing the famous Carney. Like capturing a polar bear. I suppose you know I've got your job. Frankly, I don't think it's worth the few extra dollars a week. What a lot of work. The way Hurd dictates! I don't get much chance to talk to the ops but there's a chap on the *Princess Patricia* who's giving me a rush so I don't have time to mope. Cheerio."

Isabel smiled as she tucked it back into the envelope. It was nice of her to write. And the flattery in "capturing the famous Carney," a tribute from an expert, had a fillip of its own.

On the way back to the wireless station they paused to watch the wild ponies being taken off to the ship. The herd in the wire enclosure looked the worse for a week's confinement. "They mill about and kick and bite each other," Matthew said, "Especially the stallions, who don't like to find their mares mixed up with the other chaps'. And of course they've had nothing to eat since they were caught."

"Isn't there hay in the barn at Main Station?"

"That's for the stable ponies this winter. Anyhow, these wild ones are easier to handle when they've been starved a bit."

She sniffed. They watched the operation from the crest of a dune overlooking the enclosure and the beach. A post was driven deep in the sand outside the gate, and to this was fastened a rope with a running noose at the farther end. Giswell, the pony expert, ducked under the fence and threw the noose over the head of a pony near the gate. The astonished beast backed away, drawing the rope tight about its neck as if determined on suicide rather than submit to the indignities awaiting it. The men watched carefully. The pony had reached the uttermost inch of the rope and stood motionless, with its whole weight thrown back, eyes bulging, mouth gaping for air. In a minute the beast began to sway on its feet. A young lifeboatman slipped inside nimbly and fastened a trip rope to one of the forefeet.

Now the gate was opened and a pair of men led the pony, staggering, drawn by the merciless halter, through a sandy gully to the beach. There it was thrown by a quick jerk on the trip rope. Swiftly two men pounced upon it, lashing all four feet together with stout line. Now the frightened beast was permitted to breathe. Gasping, helpless, trembling, inert, it was rolled over upon a large wooden hand-barrow, picked up bodily by a group of island men, carried down to the water, and slid into the bottom of a surfboat. Three of these bound captives made a load for the boat. The seamen rowed it out to the edge of the shoals, where the motor-boat threw them a line and gave them a tow to the ship. The rest was simple. The *Lord Elgin's* derrick lowered a cargo hook and one by one the ponies were swung aboard by the lashings on their feet.

Isabel, watching, had to clench her teeth to keep from crying out. At last she could stand it no longer.

"How brutal!" Carney and Sargent looked at each other.

"And why must they be sent away? They're perfectly happy here, aren't they?"

"Yes," Carney said ironically, "but you can't convince the kind souls on the main. It's done because from time to time someone ashore gets a notion that the Marina ponies would be better off on the mainland. So the orders come, and away the ponies go, forty or fifty at a time—'rescued,' that's the word, 'rescued from their starvation and exposure on Marina.' And as the ponies can be sold for cash that makes the theory perfect. It's all very humanitarian and wonderful."

"And yet," Isabel said sharply, "you helped to chase them. Skane gloried in it, I saw his face. And Matthew, I saw yours."

Carney flushed and turned away, muttering something about "Had to be done . . . McBain had his orders . . . more hands less work"

"Besides," Sargent said, "it's something to do." Isabel shot him a furious glance but his face was innocent. She stalked away from that hateful scene with the two men silent at her heels.

As they came over the last dune before the wireless station they saw a saddled pony hitched to the porch. In a moment a slim figure in trousers and mackinaw shirt came out quickly and rode away towards the east. Carney and Sargent went in by the porch door, Sargent to relieve Skane at the phones, Carney to deliver Skane's letters. Isabel turned towards the apartment. As she passed the watch-room she glanced in and met



the gaze of Skane himself. He was standing at the window, hands in pockets, phones on his head, and he was smiling, whether in reminiscence or at herself she could not tell. She seemed to see a certain mockery on his lips. She went on quickly to her kitchen.

"That girl," she announced in a hard voice, when Matthew came in. "You ought to stop it. I wondered why she wasn't at the landing place—so must everybody else."

"Oh, no!" he protested. "Everybody on Marina, including Pa and Ma Giswell, knows that Sara comes to see Skane. She's had a case of puppy love since she was fourteen and it hasn't worn off yet, that's all. Nobody takes it seriously, least of all Skane."

"She's not a puppy now. Skane must know that."

"But I tell you he"

"Matthew, darling, you mustn't judge all men by yourself. As for the girl, she's a half-wild creature with no more moral sense than the ponies on the dunes. Heaven knows I'm broad-minded but, after all, a thing like that, going on right under my nose"

Carney took off his coat and dropped it on a chair. "Look here, my dear, this doesn't sound like you. I can't forbid the girl to come here. What would her family think?"

"Her family! From all I hear, Matthew, her family live more or less like animals—and so do half these wonderful people of yours! A tribe of savages in flannel and dungarees!"

"You don't understand," Matthew said doggedly. "They're decent people."

She saw that he was not to be moved. He was one of them after all. Carney of Marina! She asked casually, "Did the mail order come—the things from Eaton's?"

"Yes, McBain will send them up in the wagon tomorrow."

Isabel walked across the room and sat on the arm of his chair. "I'm sorry I spoke so nastily, Matthew—about the girl. I was upset. The cold, I suppose, and that revolting business of the ponies. But there was something else. It didn't occur to me until the last moment, when those other women still waited on the beach so patiently, that there'd be no letters for you and me from people who cared for us. Oh, Matthew, how alone we are!" She said this in a mournful tone that touched his heart, putting her head down on his shoulder and staring at the floor.

"We have each other," he said woodenly.

"Yes, but it frightens me sometimes. The world doesn't know we exist, and doesn't care. And suppose something happened to you? Whatever should I do?"

"You mustn't frighten yourself with fancies."

"Don't you ever worry about something happening to me?"

"What shall I say, after giving you that advice?" he answered smiling.

CHAPTER 15

With the disappearance of O'Dell's faint smoke towards the west the garrison of Marina settled down for a winter's siege. For two months the wet autumn gales had flogged the island. Now came the gales of winter, blowing down from Hudson Bay and over the snow-bound forests and the frozen Gulf. Between gales a restless breeze played over the dunes, set up in the telephone poles a hum of invisible bees, and drew from the aerial wires a mournful crooning that seemed to Isabel worse than the banshee screaming of the storms. Then came times when the great silent cold of the Pole reached down and gripped the island and the sea and all was as still as death. Then the blood seemed to shrink in the veins as the red alcohol shrank in the thermometer. By day the sky had an odd grey tint. The sea had a viscid surface that gleamed and moved with the waves like the skin of some enormous reptile slowly shuddering with the cold; and the dunes had a sharp creak underfoot as if each descending boot crushed invisible mice. In the night the very roof and walls of the station seemed to whimper, and the clapboard nails shrank and lost their hold, letting go with the sound of pistol shots.

Within the wireless station there was no comfort except close by the stoves. The bedrooms were frigid. Skane and Sargent went to their beds muffled like Arctic explorers. The very sea lost its energy in the cold, moving in low swells that flattened and slid up the beaches almost without sound.

Fortunately these spells seldom lasted long. Then the invisible Gulf Stream exerted its mysterious influence. Snow began to fall in slow large flakes and the islanders greeted it as the lost Israelites in the desert must have greeted a fall of manna.

For a time after the departure of the November boat Isabel had

occupied herself in decorating the apartment with her mail-order purchases, ordered by radio from Halifax and sent down in the care of O'Dell. Now the windows looked decent for the first time in prim white curtains that veiled the empty face of the dunes and the cold glare of the lagoon. Now there was a new arm-chair, and covers of bright chintz over the old one and the worn kitchen couch, pictures on the walls. Isabel had painted the kitchen chairs and table a cheerful red, and covered the worn board floor with the sleek bareness of linoleum.

All these had given a glow of satisfaction for a time, but soon the novelty wore away. Like Matthew and the others she spent her idle hours in the watch-room. There was no pleasure to be had out-of-doors, and there was an end even to those cheerful little musicals at McBain's house. In truth they were prisoners all; from end to end of Marina the people stayed close to their stoves, and only the beach patrols ventured forth.

The sound of the spark no longer outraged Isabel. She had grown used to it, as Matthew had foretold. In fact, she had learned the code. It was not difficult—much easier than shorthand, she pointed out to Matthew. When the days grew short and the evenings intolerably long she fell into the habit of sitting at the instruments with the man on watch. He would plug in an extra pair of phones for her and explain this point or that in the babel of dots and dashes that filled her ears.

At first the great passenger liners were beyond her grasp. They shrilled away on high notes like operatic sopranos, and at speeds close to thirty words a minute. The smaller liners and the tramps were more companionable, droning along at twenty or so; and frequently there were trawlers, rolling scuppers-under out there somewhere on the Banks and muttering away to each other at a childish ten or fifteen. The trawlers were Isabel's kindergarten class, and after a time she could follow the drift of tramp-steamer conversations, watching her companion's pencil for the letters she missed.

She learned to send as well. She cajoled Matthew into rigging a small key and buzzer at the end of the long instrument-table, and there she practised with a diligence that surprised the men and somewhat surprised herself. The others helped her, Matthew indulgently, Sargent with the pleased but somewhat lofty air of a young man who sees a woman trying to play a man's game; but it was Skane who took the

deepest interest. He would sit listening patiently while she spelt out in wobbly Morse whole pages of some stale tattered magazine, or a chapter from that bible of their craft, the *Handbook of Wireless Telegraphy.*

"Stop!" he would explain. "You're clipping your dashes again!" Or, "You muffed those dots, 'h' has four . . . more space between words . . . try to get a rhythm into it, as if you were tapping a drum, say." Or he would snap, "Keep your wrist *down.*"

"But I can make the dots more sharply when I lift my wrist!"

"Sure! But how long could you keep it up on that big key yonder? You'd have telegraphist's cramp in twenty minutes. Forget your fingers. You've got to use your wrist and to some extent your forearm if you want a steady style."

Matthew, looking on, would smile and say mildly, "After all, Skane, she isn't planning to go up for a ticket." And she would cry, "But I want to learn, Matthew! Greg, show me how to hold my hand again." And Skane would press her wrist down to the proper angle, and murmur, "All right. Take it from there—and don't try for speed. That'll come with practice."

The whimsical attitude of Matthew and Sargent nettled her. She determined to confound them. She had taken up telegraphy merely to pass the time but soon it became an obsession. She discovered that she had a knack for it. The nervous skill of wrists and fingers that for years had rattled a typewriter at top speed could be adapted to a telegraph key.

One day when Matthew and Sargent had gone for a walk along the beach she sat at the instruments with Skane, copying word for word with him the messages of a freighter bound for Boston. There followed a lull in the phones, one of those dull periods in every watch when all the ships and shore stations fell silent together as people sometimes do in a busy room.

"Greg," she begged, "give me another sending test—now, while the others are out." He slipped aside one of the phones, and she moved to the practice key. Skane stared at his watch.

"Okay, go ahead."

She tapped out a dozen paragraphs of the *Handbook,* working earnestly, with the tip of her tongue caught between her teeth.

"Well?" she asked eagerly, looking up.

"An average of sixteen words a minute, I'd say, and perfectly done,

all but the 'c' in 'inductance'—you bungled that. But you've come along. You really have!"

She flushed with pleasure. "Don't tell the others."

"Why?"

"I'm still not satisfied. What's top speed?"

"About thirty words, on one of those old pump-handle keys anyhow. That's fast, mind you. A hundred and fifty letters a minute. When you're doing that, you're pounding brass and no fooling. Of course you'll find—don't think I'm being superior—you'll find that fifteen words a minute come fairly easily once you've learned the code. Then with a bit of practice you reach twenty. After that every word you add to your speed comes mighty hard. Mind you, twenty's the minimum for a First Class ticket and most ship ops don't go any faster than that. It's different on busy shore stations and on the big liners, where at times you've got a lot of traffic to clear off."

"How fast does Matthew send when he's not rushed?"

"Usually twenty or less. Nobody ever rushed Matt. He's got an easy-going style, nothing fancy, a good clear fist that anyone could copy all day."

"What about Sargent?"

"Depends on how he feels. He's a smart kid. Likes to rattle it off at thirty when he's working a liner like MKC—that's *Olympic*—where the ops are top notch. Usually goes along at twenty-five, though. It's much more comfortable if you've got a lot to send."

"And you?"

"About the same."

"You're modest. Matthew says you and a chap named Merton at Cape Race are the crack operators on this coast."

Skane regarded his bony hands and long fingers with the wisps of black hair on their backs. "I can rip it off at thirty, if that's what you mean. But it's only swank to do that when twenty-five or less will handle the traffic. Matt used to say there ought to be a printed motto in every station working ship traffic—*Twenty's Plenty*. When you're young like Sargent you feel the urge to tear it off as fast as you can, and you get a kick out of it when some poor fumbling Sparks aboard a tramp has to ask for a repeat. Gives you a superior feeling; and you repeat at a painful fifteen or twenty, just to show the chap—and anybody else who may be

listening—what a patient wonder you are. It's a game called 'roasting' that every operator knows.

"I remember when the first German liner appeared in these waters after the war. We had a young chap here like Sargent, just out of the navy and full of hot steam and ginger. We had a few messages for the German and our boy had a fine time roasting the ears off the German's junior op. The chap kept asking for repeats, and finally our wonder boy cracked off 'Get another op.' That's the ultimate insult in this business, you understand. Well, the German fetched his chief, who turned out to be an old hand at the game. He copied our messages all right and then announced he had some stuff for retransmission to New York. His apparatus was one of those Telefunken outfits that warble like a canary, and he had two hundred messages, nearly all in German.

"He must have screwed down his key to the least possible working gap, and he zipped those messages at our hero in bunches of ten, going a blue streak. Clinnett—the wonder boy—was sweating blood inside five minutes. He couldn't use the station typewriter because the signals weren't loud enough, so it was pencil and pad, with a duplicate to be made for every message, a carbon sheet to be whipped into place for each new message, and the completed messages to be torn off and marked with the time of receipt—and all that with the German sailing straight on at about thirty words a minute. I know, because I was here in the room and so was Matt, and we plugged in to hear the German's side of the game. The air was quiet. You could sense dozens of other chaps, ship and shore, listening in—because everyone knew what was up.

"At the end of the fourth or fifth group Clinnett had to ask for a repeat—a signature here, a word or two there. At the end of the seventh he was asking for whole phrases. You could fairly see the German grinning. And then it came, a curt little service message in perfect English, addressed to the O-in-C, Marina, demanding 'Please use capable operator.' There was dead silence in the phones for a moment, and then you could hear ships up and down the coast piping *'hi-hi-hi'*—the signal for a laugh. And the laugh was on us, on Marina, you see. Matt was furious."

"What happened?" Isabel asked.

"Matt took over the watch himself, tapping out 'O-in-C here' in his slow way and telling the German to go on with his messages in groups

of ten. By that time everyone on the coast was listening, for they all knew Carney's fist—and they knew what was coming. A lot of smart ship ops have been fooled by that fist of Matt's. They think they've got a slow chum at the other end of the line and they screw down their keys and try to roast him. Well, Matt's been in this game so long that the code's his native language—he *thinks* in dots and dashes. And nothing bothers him—interference, static, speed—nothing. He can read the stuff by instinct, and faster than any human hand could send it. Everyone on the coast knew that, but the German didn't and away he went like greased lightning with his next ten messages.

"At the end of them Matt gave him 'R' for the lot, and added 'Send faster.' The German zipped off another group; and again Matt said 'Send faster.' The German was good, mind you; he was sending as fast as any man could go. But he couldn't keep up that pace. His wrist was getting tired. When he tried to cram on a bit more speed it was fatal. He began to make mistakes, falling all over himself, going back and repeating. Another group, and Matt cracked off, in that same slow fist, mind you, 'Send much faster. Have other traffic to clear.' There was a pause, and the German came on again, going at a terrific rate. But when he got to the third or fourth message he stumbled badly and repeated, zipped on for a bit, and stumbled again.

"By the time he got to his twelfth group the German was stumbling and fumbling, making a stuttering mess of it; and then Matt put an end to it, tapping out in his calm way, 'Use recognized code or get someone who can.'

"You should have heard the chorus in the phones—every op in the area snickering out '*hi-hi-hi.*' Even Clinnett laughed, standing there beside Matt with a pair of phones plugged in. And then in the silence before the German's junior op came on again, sending at Matt's own rate, a bit over twenty, no more, Matt got out of the chair and motioned Clinnett towards the pencil and the message pads. 'Take over,' he said. 'And after this don't act the fool at my key.' Can't you hear him saying that?"

"Yes," Isabel said. "My key, my station, my island—they're all his, really, aren't they? But it all sounds a bit childish, if you'll forgive me. I thought this was a serious business."

Skane grinned. "It is, most of the time. That's why we like a bit of fun now and then."

"Something to do!"

He glanced at her curiously. "You don't like that expression, do you?"

"No. But I'm beginning to see the point. That's why I want to be able to do twenty-five on that key."

He chuckled. "Anyone would think you intend to take a watch."

"Well, why not? Suppose one of you became ill, or what's more likely, suppose you fell off a pony and broke your arm?"

Skane slipped the phone over his free ear, listened a moment, and made an entry in the log. "That's happened before—a chap ill, I mean. Happens on every station from time to time. The other two simply stand watch-and-watch—six hours on, six off—till the fellow's better, or till the boat brings a relief op."

"It would be awful to depend on a woman for anything important, wouldn't it?" she said scornfully. And then in a persuasive voice, "Look at the life you men lead. Sometimes two of you can get away for a walk or a ride or a duck shoot together; but usually one man's on watch, one's sleeping, and the other's at a loose end. If he goes out, he goes alone. Don't you see what I mean? Each of you lives in a frightful solitude."

"Not Matt."

"Even Matthew. Have you noticed Matthew lately? He's become awfully dull. He goes out for a walk now and then, but never for long. I know how he used to love walking the beach at night, especially in storms. He never does that any more. Don't you see, Greg, if I could take a watch now and then, you three could go off together for hours."

She leaned towards him eagerly and put a hand on his arm. For a time Skane did not reply. His hard blue gaze was directed past the receiving apparatus to the window, to the whirl of sand about the butt of the mast. "And what about you?"

"Think how important I'd feel! If you only knew how I long to do something that matters."

"You're Carney's wife. Doesn't that matter?"

"Yes, but that's only one part of my life, and of his, too."

"You get our meals. You're the most important person on the station. You should have heard Vedder."

She drew her hand away sharply. "Oh, you're impossible!"

Skane turned. "I didn't mean to be insulting. I was trying to convey how much we appreciate your presence here."

"You thought I was a nuisance when I came," she retorted.

"Yes," he admitted. He resumed his stare out of the window and she saw his lips tighten.

"I thought Carney had no business to bring you here. I still think that. Don't ask me to explain. And now I hear MSU calling, offering P."

"What's that mean?"

He grimaced. "*Aquitania* with a lot of mushy sentiments, mostly from ladies of the stage and screen, addressed to all the fools and knaves from London to Los Angeles." He settled the message pads and pencils before him and threw the transmitting switch. In the engine-room the trumpet blared, and amid that brazen music Isabel rose and went back to the apartment.

CHAPTER 16

On the afternoon before Christmas, Giswell drove up in his buggy, with young Sara beside him. He thundered on the apartment door and walked in. Matthew lay on the couch smoking and watching Isabel prepare a plum pudding. The smiling little man, reddened by the cold, threw on the kitchen table a pair of chickens, plucked and cleaned. They had frozen on the way from Number Three and fell like blocks of wood. "There's your Christmas dinner!"

"How wonderful!" Isabel cried. "I was afraid I'd have to serve tinned meat. Do take off your things and sit down. How's everything at Number Three?"

Giswell took off his woollen cap but remained by the door. "Can't stay. The wind's come east again and there's a smell of snow—a blizzard if I know the signs."

"Where's Sara?" Carney said.

"Oh, Sara, she went to talk to Skane. You git on with that puddin', ma'am. I'll talk to Matt a bit." Isabel returned to her baking and Matthew and Giswell drifted into typical island talk—the thickness of the lagoon ice, the state of the wild ponies, and duck-shooting yarns going back through the years. At length Giswell departed. He went along the plank walk and rapped on the watch-room window, and in a moment his daughter emerged from the porch and climbed into the buggy beside him.

Matthew and Isabel threw open their door and called farewells. The girl favoured Carney with a quick dark smile, but when she turned her gaze to Isabel she gave her a slow look up and down, acknowledged her greeting with a nod, and then Giswell flicked the reins and they drove off.

"I don't think she likes me," Isabel said, shutting the door.

By Giswell's favour the Christmas dinner was a famous affair of roast chicken with stuffing, cranberry sauce, potatoes, turnips and parsnips. For dessert there was mince pie (the mincemeat out of a tin) and plum pudding with candy sauce.

Skane was on watch when they sat down to eat. Isabel was touched to find that Matthew had ordered and received by the autumn boat a pair of soft bedroom slippers for her, which he now presented. And Sargent had saved out of his parcel from home a box of chocolates which he produced, painstakingly wrapped in tissue and tied with a ribbon he had got from Mrs. McBain. For her part, she had knitted mittens for each of them, red for Matthew, green for Sargent and blue for Skane.

When they had finished their coffee Sargent withdrew for an afternoon walk to Main Station and Carney went along the plank walk to relieve Skane. Skane came into the kitchen wearing his old shabby uniform but she observed that he had got his hair cut and that he was freshly shaved. He wished her a Merry Christmas, and in an offhand way passed her a package wrapped in tissue. In it she found a photograph of Skane and Matthew, in a wooden frame, shaped, painted and furnished with beckets of cord to represent a miniature ship's lifebuoy. On the white circumference Skane had painted in neat black letters MARINA ISLAND RADIO, CHRISTMAS 1920.

"Actually," he informed her, "the picture was taken two years ago. The female creature in the middle used to stick out of the sand down by Main Station. The figurehead of a French barque named *Clélie* that piled up on the east bar forty or fifty years ago. She's rather a good bit of carving, don't you think?"

"She's rather—opulent," Isabel observed. "And she looks as if she'd just taken a bath in her nightie."

"Well," said Skane, busy with his dinner, "after all, the original *Clélie* was the Roman girl who swam the Tiber to get away from the Etruscans."

"I'd like to see this *Clélie*. You must show her to me."

"I'm afraid she's gone. She toppled over in a storm a few months after that picture was taken. A big dune moved in and buried her—millions of grains of sand hustling in to cover poor *Clélie's* modesty."

They laughed together and Isabel said, "I'll have a cup of coffee with you for company. You haven't opened my present."

Skane unwrapped the mittens. "Just what I wanted!"

"That's what you're supposed to say."

"They're very nicely made," he observed handsomely. He offered her a cigarette, struck a match on his boot and held it for her. As she leaned forward with the cigarette between her lips their eyes met in the curious intimacy of the rite and there was an odd little silence. Something in the quality of Skane's gaze set a pulse beating in her throat. For a moment she forgot the cigarette. An old silly habit of flushing over trifles suddenly possessed her. She fixed her attention on the cigarette, murmuring "Thanks," and staring out of the window with a false air of interest.

Skane lit his own cigarette and sat back in his chair, regarding her with that unchanged gaze. She wanted to break this uneasy spell, which had come from nowhere, without reason; but she could not find a thing to say. Skane reached out to flick his ash into a saucer, and the hand that was so quick and sure at the key in the watch-room seemed unsteady, as if it had fallen under the same mysterious spell. The ash fell on the tablecloth.

At last she found something to say. "Sara Giswell called to see you yesterday, and you were out."

"So Sargent told me."

"You're not very kind to her, are you?"

"My dear Mrs. Carney, surely you know Sara's the belle of Marina? She could have any of McBain's crew, or Sargent, say, just by whistling them up."

"But not you!"

"I'm not susceptible—put it that way."

"But I've heard you used to be. What made the change?"

Skane drew hard on his cigarette and opened his mouth, letting the fumes drift forth. "That's too long a story to be interesting—and too serious a one."

He rose, picked up the mittens and walked to the door. "After all, it's

Christmas and we should be merry. Let me tell you something to make you smile. Our shy boy Sargent confessed to me last night, when he was packing up his gift, that he was half in love with you."

He was laughing as he said this, and she felt again that creeping flush. She turned to clear the table, feeling absurdly hot and indignant. In the clatter of dishes she heard the door slam and Skane's retreating footsteps on the walk.

CHAPTER 17

GISWELL'S nose for weather proved accurate. For a night and a day the blizzard screamed through the wires and scoured roof, walls and windows with blasts of snow. The telephone wires blew down again and McBain's men did not get them repaired until New Year's Day. On that afternoon the box on the wall uttered a cheerful tinkle and Isabel took down the receiver.

"It's for you," she said. Matthew rose from the desk, slipping one of the radio phones aside. Isabel sauntered into the hall. Skane and Sargent had gone for a walk on the lagoon ice. She had never seen their rooms and it seemed a good moment to indulge her curiosity. Sargent's door was open. She stood for a few moments looking in. It was like the cell of a monk. The furniture consisted of a narrow iron bed, a plain wooden chair and a small birchwood chest of drawers. In one corner lay Sargent's sea-chest, a stout wooden thing with rope beckets for handles, and his name in large white letters on the top. A row of hooks held a raincoat, a ragged pair of trousers and the complete uniform of a radio officer in the merchant marine.

She went along to Skane's room. The door stood half-open and she pushed it wide, feeling like Bluebeard's wife. The room was like Sargent's even to the sea-chest. A sealskin with the hair worn down to the hide lay beside the iron bed. The clothes on the hooks were odds and ends, trousers, jackets, sweaters, a suit of oilskins, all very shabby and worn. Despite these the room had the look of rigid neatness that she had found in Sargent's, and which she supposed was a result of sea training.

She noticed a photograph album among some books and could not resist the temptation to open it. There were snapshots of various ships; pictures of men in shabby uniforms, leaning against a ship's rail, against

a lifeboat on its chocks, on a sun-blazing white road with a background of palms. There was one of Skane in tropical whites, with his cap at a jaunty angle and a lock of black hair across his forehead. He looked very young. The album was only half-full, and among the snapshots there were gaps with traces of paste and wrenched fragments of paper. And there was not a picture of a woman. From first to last, not one. He had torn them out.

There was a sound towards the front door. She put the books back and fled on tiptoe into the hall. Back in the watch-room Matthew was adjusting the receiver dials and tapping a finger on the crystal detector. He listened on the phones intently for a moment and scribbled on the pad before him.

"Hello," he said, looking up. "Where've you been?"

"Exploring," she said honestly.

"What did you find?"

"Nothing. What was the telephone call?"

"Oh! McBain. He wanted us to come down for a party tonight. New Year, you know. Skane's going down to play the piano. But I said I didn't fancy walking back in the dark, and I wouldn't put him to the trouble of driving us home."

"Oh, Matthew, I wish you'd said yes. We could walk back on the lagoon ice: there'll be starlight. And it's so long since we had talk with anybody but ourselves."

He stirred uneasily. "We'd get back very late, and I haven't been sleeping well. Why don't you go along with Skane?"

"I'd rather go with you."

"I'm afraid that's impossible."

She walked over and sat on the edge of the desk. "Matthew, do you know you're getting awfully strange? What on earth's the matter? Giswell says you used to go everywhere, even in winter. Have I made a difference? Is it me?"

He gazed stonily out of the window. "No."

"Then, what in heaven's name is it?"

"Nothing—nothing, my dear. It's just that I don't like to leave the station for long nowadays—the engine, you know."

"Pooh! It's Sargent's watch this evening. If the engine broke down he could phone McBain's."

"Sargent's just a young chap. You don't understand."

She slid from the desk. "No, I don't understand. I don't understand anything. For some time now I've had a feeling that you're all keeping something from me. Sometimes I think it's some guilty secret that you all share. Don't say Pooh or Nonsense, Matthew, as if I were just a silly woman being emotional over nothing. It's here. It's real. I feel it. This mystery! As if you'd all done a murder and buried the corpse under the station!"

She swung about, back to the wall. "Even when I make love, it's not the same. You're not the same. You seem reluctant. Why? Why won't you look me in the eyes any more?"

Carney sat in the familiar posture at the instruments, with his big forearms resting on the desk before him, his hands within quick reach of the receiver dials and the key, his immovable gaze fixed on the dunes outside. He betrayed no emotion whatever.

"I suppose you think I'm just being neurotic!" she cried.

He spoke then. "I'm afraid it's something of that sort," he said carefully, and without shifting his gaze. "I've heard men talk like that. And it always comes in the winter, about now, or in February, when they've been thrown in each other's company for months. They begin to suspect each other of slights, insults, petty injustices, all sorts of things. Some chaps get high-strung at this work. They get on each other's nerves and finally they fly off the handle—usually at each other's throats. I've seen men trying to kill each other with their fists, here in this room. I saw Skane, the first winter he was here, standing where you are now and slugging it out with a wild red-haired chap from up the Gulf."

"Skane?" she said. "Of course you stopped them."

"Not at all. There had to be something to clear the air, and there it was. I was afraid for a moment that they'd upset the stove and set the place afire. But a chance blow of Skane's knocked the other chap through that window behind you and they finished it outside."

"And you—the O-in-C—didn't do a thing about it?"

"Oh, yes. Somebody had to keep watch. I picked the phones off the floor where Skane had flung them and went on with it."

Isabel uttered a small harsh laugh. "That sounds like everything else I've heard about Marina. Savages!"

Carney did not answer. The silence was broken by Skane and Sargent, bursting in red-faced and cheerful from their walk.

"Hello!" Skane said. "You look very serious, you two. Is the secret out?"

Isabel gave him a startled glance. Carney swung sharply in the chair.

"Secret, Skane?"

"Then you don't know?" Skane waved a hand. "Behold, my star pupil. Yesterday, my dear O-in-C, your wife did a perfect twenty words a minute, for ten minutes by the clock. You've got another op on your staff!"

Carney turned to her slowly in astonishment. "Not really?"

"Really," she said, with indifference. But Skane had seen the strained, the desperate look on her face.

CHAPTER 18

ON AN afternoon late in February, Isabel sat in the watch-room wearing the phones. She was alone. It was a triumph. After all the months of practice and after a whole morning's persuasion, Matthew had consented to let her take a watch. The difficult part had been to convince him that she must take it absolutely alone.

"What!" he had protested. "None of us?"

"None!" Skane had put in swiftly. "Sargent and I are taking a walk to West Light, and you're coming with us."

"But the engine"

"Damn the engine. It's running sweetly anyhow."

"I don't like it," Carney muttered. "Couldn't we just walk down to the beach a bit and come back?"

"No!" Isabel put in firmly.

"Very well," he said reluctantly. And he had gone off between Skane and Sargent, wearing his old khaki duck coat and saying, "I don't like it!" in a futile voice.

It was a sunny day and the breeze was quite mild for February, a foretaste of spring. The men would enjoy their walk. In the succession of storms there had been a few days of mild weather, but these had been wet and had given them more anxiety than the cold. During one January night a freezing rain had fallen—the thing they dreaded more than

hurricanes or frost. It was what Nova Scotians called a "silver thaw," coating every branch and twig with ice and glittering in the next day's sunshine like an enormous crystal chandelier.

The stays of the huge radio mast were stout enough to hold their unusual load; but the slender phosphor-bronze wires of the aerial itself had become the thickness of a man's wrist, and they broke from the masthead with a clatter that startled the operator on watch and brought the others out of their beds. Nothing could be done until morning, and altogether the station was off the air for twelve hours.

The repair was difficult. Ordinarily the aerials were held at the top of the mast by their spreader, a stout wooden spar that could be lowered to the ground by means of a halyard. Now, however, the spreader, bereft of its metallic load, remained at the masthead, frozen and immovable. That meant hoisting a man up to the top of the mast. The halyard of a bosun's chair passed through a block at the masthead, but there was no means of knowing how good or bad was the lashing of that block after the storms. And the greatest danger was the great pine mast itself. Its whole easterly cheek from top to bottom—a hundred and sixty-five feet—was bloated by a growth of ice several inches thick.

"You see what it means," Carney said, as they rigged the bosun's chair. "The sun's out now and that ice is apt to let go in chunks when I knock against it, going up. You chaps will have to mind your heads below."

"We're not hoisting you up," Skane said. "You're too big."

"Let me go," Sargent suggested. His grin was nervous as he said it. The masthead looked an enormous distance in the sky. Skane slipped into the chair.

Isabel, glancing from her window, was astonished to see him sitting in what appeared to be a child's swing and going slowly up the mast, fending himself off gingerly as he went. She ran out, concerned by the anxious look on Matthew's face. As she approached he cried, without shifting his attention from the dangling man in the chair, "Isabel? Go back to the walk!"

"But surely I can help you?" she appealed.

"Get away, I say!" There was a harsh note in his voice that she had never heard before. As she stood on the plank walk and watched what followed, her blood went cold. Skane's lean form rose towards the sky

in slow jerks, swinging, fending off with hands and feet. Each time he swayed against the mast a piece of the ice came down and, with no more warning than Skane's quick shout, fell like a javelin towards the straining men below.

They could not jump clear, and each of those falling ice shapes, so exquisitely moulded to the form of the mast, could kill a man. It seemed to Isabel an eternity before they got Skane to the top. Another passed before his voice came floating down like a cry from another world.

"Okay! Lower away on the bridle!"

Down it came with the spreader, that dull wooden thing, so much more important than men's necks or skulls, while Skane remained like a small black spider at the masthead, hung by a bit of gossamer. When they lowered the bosun's chair at last the strain showed in all their faces. They laughed and thumped each other with their fists, as men do when they wish to conceal an emotion that has shaken them; and they were astonished when Isabel ran up to them crying incoherent things, flinging her arms about each one in turn and kissing him on the mouth. They chaffed her about it afterwards in their irritating male way, as if no one but she had given the job a moment's concern.

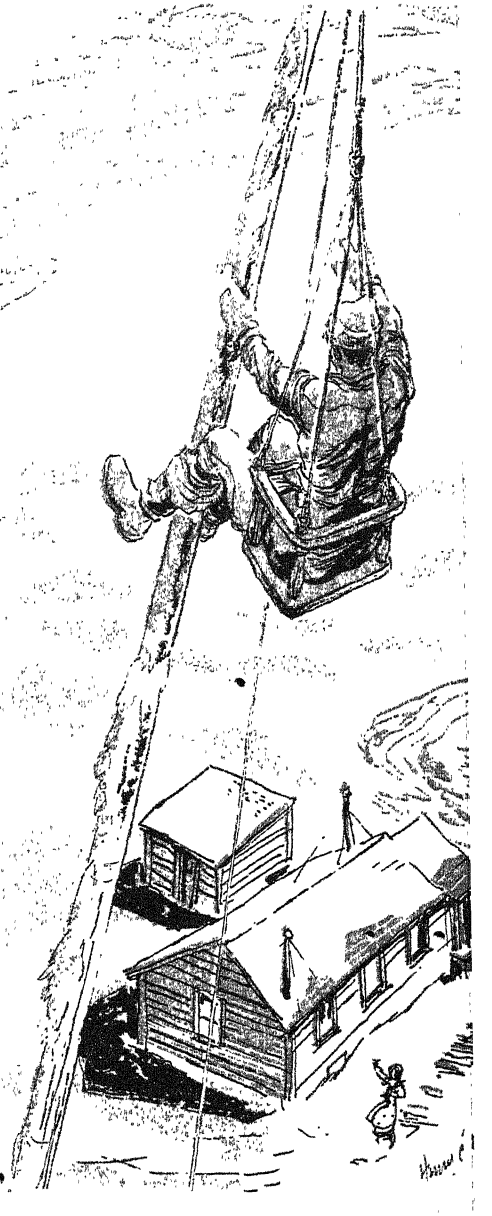
Now, WEEKS after the incident, Isabel could smile about it. In her six months on the island she had come to regard them with something of the air of a maiden aunt responsible for three schoolboy nephews. She had soon acquired this feeling towards Sargent; and it was odd to think that she had once been afraid of Skane. As for Matthew, she had been attracted by the naïve small boy in him from the first. Even as a lover he had been governed always by her own impulses; now, in the strange aloofness that had come upon him with the onset of winter, he seemed less of a lover and more of a recluse. After that ecstasy in the autumn their passion had drifted into a sort of hibernation, as if it were subject to the weather like everything else on Marina.

But this feeling of amused indulgence towards the three men was shadowed by the mystery in which they seemed to wrap some part of their thoughts, and which her intuition could not pierce. At first she decided that she was making a puzzle out of nothing more than the instinctive reserve of the human male. But there came days and nights when it seemed that behind their professional jargon, their casual jokes,

there lay something concealed. Something that concerned her as much as themselves but that she must find out alone. What was it? She wondered if there were not some truth in that wild quip of hers about a corpse beneath the station. The whole island was a sepulchre. Those skulls and bones in the rocket-house! Wasn't this queer tension in the wireless station simply a mystic pressure from the nameless dead of Marina?

This is the way your mind goes, Isabel told herself. When you come, you don't notice it. During the first winter, long nights and short grey days, months of hearkening to the wind in the aerials, you begin to feel it. After the second winter you'll believe it. Then you'll be one with the rest of them, the prey of phantoms, a prisoner of the weather and the sea —and of the dark. Three or four times a year you'll dress up in shabby finery and go down the beach to make your obeisance to O'Dell, and then you'll go back to your hiding place among the dunes, to that eternal surveillance by the watchful eyes of the dead.

For a long time Matthew had been immune. He had even preferred to roam about the beaches in the dark, he had loved a storm at night, the turmoil of great seas rolling in, breaking and slithering



almost to his feet. But now he went no more in the dark. The fall of dusk now closed the prison doors for him as for the Kahns, the Giswells and the rest. Skane still made his lone dark journeys after dreaming at McBain's piano, but it seemed to her that he was not immune either. It was just that he was haunted by a different set of ghosts. As for Sargent, that ingenuous youth had not been long enough on Marina to come under the spell. He was like herself, a novice in the sepulchre.

With the slow passage of the winter weeks Isabel found herself slipping into these dark moods more often. There was always the same sense of tragedy beside her . . . all about her . . . whispering in tones too thin to understand, like some far ship in the phones, calling Marina with signals too faint to be read. Slowly, the sun crawled north towards the Line. The men moved about the station like automatons. The last magazine had been read to rags, the last fillip wrung out of battered playing cards. They went on watch with eagerness; it was the one time in the day when each of them became fully alive. With Matthew, with Sargent, but mostly with Skane, as they sat at the instruments, Isabel had come to know that marvellous sensation of flight into another existence, which came by putting on the phones. And because her mind was not hampered by their professional boredom she saw more clearly than any of them the romance, the miracle of what they called "pounding brass."

When you put on the phones it was as if your inner self stepped out of the bored and weary flesh. For a space you were part of another world: the real, the actual living world of men and ships and ports, in which Marina was nothing but a sand bar and a trio of call letters in the signal books. Here were the voices of men transmuted through their fingertips, issuing in dots and dashes, speaking twenty languages in one universal code.

Here were the Americans with their quenched-spark-sets, their high flute notes; and British tramps with their synchronous rotaries, their hoarse baritone whose tune was half-way down the scale; the Canadians and their high wailing rotaries; the curious musical pop-pop-popping of the Germans with their Telefunkens; the French tramps and trawlers bleating like sheep lost in the green wet pastures of the sea; the harsh scream of the occasional Japs; the quick, jerky piping of the Italians; the ringing bosun-tones of the Norwegians, the Swedes and Danes.

All these sparks bellowed, cried, muttered or whispered together on

the six-hundred-metre wave, the main channel for ship traffic. At night, when the darkness increased their range, the uproar was terrific, the sound of a vast swamp on a spring night filled with vociferous frogs.

In all this medley there were certain sounds that had special meaning. Your own call signal first; but that was burnt into your mind with letters of fire so that its merest whisper brought you erect and alert in the chair, reaching out for pencil and message pad. There was CQ, the anonymous call that might mean anybody, the constant "Hey, Mac!" of the groping tramps. There was QST, the general call to all stations, ship and shore, which usually had to do with navigation warnings, icebergs or derelicts in the lanes, and suchlike matters. But most significant was a simple group of dots and dashes that for convenience were written SOS. This was the magic symbol by which all the frogs in the great sea-swamp could be hushed in a minute. For every operator, even for cynics like Skane and old hands like Carney, that sound never lost its thrill, its quick clutch at the heart.

Oh, yes, it was wonderful. The blood in your veins, gone sluggish in so much monotony, went tingling through them then. Whenever you put on the phones you felt the importance of the whole complex system of which your lonely outpost was a part; but when a ship cried distress in your area you became a god seeing the sparrow's fall. You *saw*. The pictures came on some sort of screen in your mind. An eerie sixth sense came to every operator. On the coastal stations each operator became known to the others by his "hand," his style, the colour of his personality flung on the mind-screens of the others by the mere contact of his fingers on the transmitting key.

As THE forms of her three men dwindled and disappeared over the dunes towards the west, Isabel thought upon these things, adjusting the crystal point. Then a bugle sounded in the phones calling Marina. With the ease of practice, she threw the big transmitting switch with her left hand and slipped her right to the key. The engine-room awakened at her touch and snarled obediently. She made her dots and dashes neatly, with that rhythm on which Skane had been so insistent.

She reversed the switch, gave the crystal an expert tap and picked up a pencil. The small bugle sang in the phones again. She watched the pencil move across the blue message form. It was as Matthew had assured

her. "Once you've got the feel of it, you're simply part of the machine. The stuff comes in on the aerials and runs right down to your fingertips."

It was a routine message: an Italian tramp inward bound for Halifax, informing the agents of its estimated arrival date and time, the bunkers and water required. She gave a receipt and called Halifax. The spark screamed through the station and over the dunes, *dit-dit-dit-da, da-dit-da-dit, dit-dit-dit,* the dots cracking out like musketry, the dashes blaring, an immense all-powerful sound. The sensation was marvellous. And when the deep drone of Halifax answered, she rattled off that humdrum message swiftly and expertly like an old hand at the game. Halifax droned "R," and there was a momentary pause. Then, "WO?" A smile played over Isabel's lips. She had half expected that. In the grey building at the harbour mouth, which she had seen blurred in the dusk as the *Lord Elgin* carried her to sea, the operator had detected a strange hand at Marina and was curious. She answered crisply, "C's wife." Another pause. Then the drone again. "Well done." That was music.

CHAPTER 19

MARCH came in, half lamb, half lion, with a strong blustering wind and a warm rain. Each clear day the shadow of the mast, like the lean and silent finger of Time, traced a slightly wider quadrant on the sand from morn to night; but each day the shadow itself was shorter. Sargent amused himself by marking the tip of the shadow at noon, whenever it was visible, with a small bit of driftwood thrust into the sand. He began in February and by the Ides of March his irregular line of sticks was like a midget fence that began and ended nowhere. "When it gets *there,*" he shouted, kicking a spot in the still-virgin sand towards the mast, "I'm off to Halifax. Think of that!" Isabel was filled with nostalgia, not for Halifax but for the countryside. In the valley where she was born the apple-trees were still black and bare, but the first robin would be whistling on the pasture rail, and in the woods the mayflower was in bud, a few in blossom, and children picking them and sniffing the fragrance that every Nova Scotian knows to be the finest in the world.

Now the shad would be going up the Fundy streams to spawn; and at Lunenburg the cod fishermen would be setting out in their lovely schooners for the first trip to the Banks. Already some of them had been

seen off West Light, fishing on the Marina Bank or passing on towards Quero or the Grand Bank.

When signs of spring appeared on Marina itself, they were a paradox: a flare of northern lights and a white invasion from the north-west, a vast ice-field that crept over the horizon and came down upon the island under the thrust of a three-day gale. The big cakes slithered in the shallows, mounting until sometimes a whole floe rose on edge into the air, swayed, buckled and collapsed. The small world of Marina was filled with a confused and mighty uproar.

"And this is a sign of spring, you say!" Isabel exclaimed.

"Well, you see," Matthew said in his slow reasonable way, "the pack-ice gathers in the Gulf all winter and then spews out to sea. We get some of it every spring. In three weeks or so the first steamer will pass up the Gulf and dock at Montreal, and the port bigwigs will be down on the dock to present the skipper with a gold-headed cane—they really do, you know."

"And what about the Northern Lights? They're so much brighter now. Isn't that a sign of colder weather?"

"A sign of change. They always seem brighter at the equinox. Remember them in September?"

She thought of those unhappy nights when she had slipped down to the shore of the lagoon. That seemed ancient now. She wondered at the passage of experience no less than the passage of time. She had not roamed in the dark since the evening party at McBain's, the first time she heard Skane play, and the spell of his music sent her weeping and passionate into Matthew's arms. She had passed some sort of equinox herself that night. The winter had brought an uneasy pause, a brooding sense of coming storm. And now spring lay ahead. According to the almanacs the vernal equinox must bring great gales and rains before one could enjoy the sunshine and the flowers.

CHAPTER 20

SARGENT's absurd pegs crept towards the mast. There were mighty winds and sandstorms, but in sunny intervals a benign warmth came upon Marina. Wild duck appeared in twos and threes, and then in hundreds, drifting like dark rafts on the surface of the lagoon.

And now on sunny afternoons Isabel began to ride again with Matthew or Skane or Sargent. One April afternoon she and Skane rode east to Number Two and called on the Lermonts. Lermont came out of the shed and took the ponies as they rode into the hollow, and plump Mary Lermont threw open her kitchen door and welcomed them.

"Thought at first it was Sara back again!" she cried. "She was here only a minute ago, didn't you see her?"

"No," they said.

"She must have rode out of sight awful quick. Been down this way every day since the ducks came, with Pa's old seal rifle. Says you can't git near 'em with a shotgun, they're that wild. Come on in."

They passed into a severe little parlour furnished after the fashion of McBain's, and chatted over tea. Mary Lermont looked sallow and it seemed to Isabel a little worn, as if the vacuum of months shut in this lonely hole had drained her soul and her complexion in a single process. She had one topic of conversation, the topic of all the island women now—The Boat.

"You heard anythin' about the *Elgin* over the wireless? No? Pretty near time we heard somethin', ain't it? I got my mail-order list made up days ago. There'll be some changes in the hands at Main, three of the lifeboat crew got enough of it this winter—goin' off to Hal'fax. Ma wants Sara to go off, too, to git a bit o' schoolin'. Sara won't have it, o' course. Great girl she's gettin'. And wild as a pony, roamin' up and down."

Mary's large blue eyes rolled as she said this, and flicked from Skane to Isabel and back again. "Ridin' out quite a bit now, ain't you, Miz Carney? Sara says she sees you quite a lot. She's always up west. Don't know why." You do, though, Isabel thought. Skane was putting aside his empty cup and rising.

"I think we'd better be getting along, hadn't we?"

She nodded and rose. There were polite murmurs, and then they were climbing out of the hollow with the Lermonts watching them from the doorway. As they passed over the crest the house and shed vanished with the suddenness of a conjuring trick. They were alone in the wilderness of dunes. Behind them only the tip of the radio mast could be seen. They rode for a time without speaking. The saddles creaked, the feet of the ponies whispered in the sand.

"Why doesn't the sand fill up hollows like that?" Isabel asked.

"Like Number Two? Well, those dunes round it are well anchored by tufts of marram and creeping stuff like beach pea. The bare dunes, like those over there"—he pointed with his whip—"are the roving kind. A wind from one quarter blowing steadily for days will shift 'em bodily. That's why from time to time the patrolmen find bones and bits of old wreckage that must have been buried for years. Look here, let's ride over to Old Two. It's only a couple of miles."

"All right. What's Old Two?"

"The original Number Two. You'll see what happens when a big dune shifts. The house was built in a hollow, secure from the weather, and for years it was all right. Then somehow the sand began to shift. The chap at Two battled with it for a year, building a fence of driftwood to hold it back, and so on. Might as well have tried to fence off the sea at low tide. The whole island crew had a go at stopping that dune—even tried shovelling it back. Finally they had to give up. The government built another station farther west."

They passed under the telephone line, ducking their heads, and rode up the shoulder of a bare sand hill. Skane reined up and Isabel, drawing abreast, saw, in a shallow ravine below, the gable end of a roof. There was a glimpse of beach at the mouth of the ravine and a white flash of surf. She regarded the protruding bit of house and laughed. "It looks silly, doesn't it? Like something you'd see in a child's sand-box."

They rode down to it and dismounted. The dune had buried the house all but that end of the roof and the gable, where an empty window frame stared like a square black eye.

"That's the attic window," Skane remarked. "Sargent and I climbed in there one day and went down inside the house—like going down a mine."

"I'd love to see it," she said impulsively. "Do take me in."

He fastened the ponies and crawled inside the window. Isabel followed, and as she scrambled to her feet Skane lit a match. In its yellow flare she could see a drift of sand along the attic floor. They passed down a narrow flight of steps and explored four small bedrooms. The walls were covered with a simple flowered paper, stained with damp, and peeling away in rotten strips.

"They took out all the furniture when the house was abandoned, of

course," Skane said. In the musty atmosphere of the empty rooms, his voice had the dull hollow echo of a grotto. The fuzzy radiance of the match threw their shadows across the farther wall, a pair of giant grotesques.

As they passed on down the main stairs to what had been the ground floor, Isabel exclaimed, "Now I know what a diver feels like inside a sunken ship! These stairs—they're built like a ship's companionway—so steep and narrow."

She laughed nervously. "It's so cold and the air has such a wet feel. I wouldn't be surprised to see an octopus or something else slimy and horrible coming out of a corner." She slipped a hand in his arm and kept close to him as he moved about the rooms, plucking matches from his jacket pocket with his free hand and striking them.

In the lowermost cavern, dank and chill as a tomb, Skane rattled the knob of the kitchen door. "You know it's quite right about it being like a sunken ship. You feel as if you could walk out of this door straight into Davy Jones's locker."

"Don't!"

"Oh, it's quite all right. Sargent and I opened the door, half expecting to see the corpse of a sailor with his hand on the other knob; but there's a heavy storm-door beyond, nailed shut."

"Ugh! Let's go back, please."

"Let's give it a good look while we're here."

He wandered about the lower rooms, striking matches, examining walls and ceilings with an interest that Isabel could not feel. She was aware of a chill horror creeping through her flesh. She moved with him. On the wall their shadows were one.

"Those old chaps didn't leave a thing when they cleared out, did they? Natural, of course. When you've lived for years with anything, you wouldn't leave it to be buried alive."

At these words Isabel quailed. She tried to force calmness into her voice.

"Do let's go, Greg—now! I'm frightened. It's silly but I actually am."

"Oh, nonsense!" He stepped away from her to look in a corner, holding a match low, and in that moment it went out. The darkness was intense. It was something wet and solid. Isabel stepped forward and groped uncertainly for the comfort of his touch. It was not there. She listened. There was not a sound. She screamed "Greg!"

"Yes?" he said, quite near at hand, but slightly behind her, not where he had been before.

"It's so dark—it's horrible! Strike another match."

"I'm sorry, I haven't got any more."

She heard him step towards her and she caught hold of his jacket. She clung to him, shuddering and sobbing, "Take me out! Take me out!"

Skane put an arm about her and they groped their way to the main stairs. She could scarcely breathe. Under the mass of sand, in the sinister darkness of the house, she seemed to feel the cold clutch of Marina itself, the evil sea-monster with its belly full of wrecks and dead men's bones and still unsatisfied. She was almost fainting when at last they emerged in the fresher air of the attic and saw the shaft of sunlight through the empty window-frame. In a few more moments they were outside.

Isabel leaned against the curled and rotten shingles of the gable as if she dared not trust her legs. Skane's arm was still about her. The draught from the sea blew cold on her damp forehead. The fear had gone, but now there was another sensation running swiftly through her nerves. She turned to Skane instinctively, not moved by fear any more but as if those frantic moments in the darkness had released some other emotion. She did not try to think what it was. The face she turned to him was that of a dreamer absorbed in a vision still obscure but of an immeasurable importance, and whose end she must know.

Skane did not speak. His arms clasped her swiftly and his lips found her mouth. Isabel stood in an attitude of utter submission, with eyes closed and hands at her sides. Skane's lips were hard and fierce. All the repressed hunger of his long monkhood on Marina seemed to find expression in the kisses he wrenched from her trembling mouth. At last he paused. She opened her eyes and met his dark-blue gaze. There was no hostility in it now, no smiling cynicism, no cool appraisal: only a need that tortured him, and a demand that was not to be denied. Even had she wished to deny, there was nothing in her experience to enable her to cope with it easily. All her cool integrity of other days, the inheritance of a Presbyterian conscience, the very knowledge of good and evil, were submerged and lost in a quick surge of emotion. Her one conscious thought was that the long frustration of the winter months had led in some mysterious way to this encounter and this moment, and now that it had come to crisis she might find relief.

Skane slipped an arm beneath her knees and carried her slowly up the ravine. The murmur of the sea receded. She felt herself carried up a slope and down another that seemed to fall quite steeply under Skane's feet. She opened her eyes for a moment and saw a small pond in a sandy bowl. It was one of the innumerable and nameless ponds from which the wild ponies drank and where they took shelter from storm. The turf by the pond was soft underfoot and Skane set her down carefully upon it. She did not move. She lay relaxed and quiet in the grass, with her face averted and eyes closed, the attitude of one wearied of struggle and submitting herself to the Fates. There was no further word. Everything had been said in the look that passed between them at the gable of Old Two.

CHAPTER 21

THE long-awaited word came. A prosaic flicker of dots and dashes informed Marina that the *Lord Elgin* would sail for the island in about three weeks' time. Along the island telephone wires the bells rang a carillon from morn to night. Sargent, on the graveyard watch, had a busy night of it; for in addition to a long recital of provisions from barrels of flour to pounds of tea, and every sort of material from drums of petrol (for the radio engine) to flasks of mercury (for the lighthouse mirror bearings), there were personal shopping lists from all the island wives addressed to friends on the mainland. All of this had to be transmitted on the three-hundred-metre wave, and in the small hours of the night, when there was little other traffic.

The blare of the great electric trumpet going on and on kept Isabel awake; and Matthew, who usually slept profoundly, seemed infected with her restlessness. Once he spoke, but she affected not to hear. She wondered if Skane were awake. She had tried not to think of Skane in Matthew's presence. At mealtimes and when she chatted with the others in the watch-room her manner towards Skane was what it had been ever since the autumn, when she lost her fear of him and talked to him as she talked to Sargent, with the air of a friendly young maiden aunt. And Skane with his quick understanding played his part. Without conscious plan, without any sort of connivance, they reserved all intimacy for the hours by the hidden pond.

Each fine afternoon Isabel rode forth with one and sometimes two of her companions. Matthew had lost his keenness for riding. He seemed to have put aside all the pleasures that once had been his whole life. He was like a hermit whose habits, simple and innocent, have been shattered with his vow of chastity, and who now seeks penance in a revulsion against joy of any sort. Skane was free every third afternoon in the rotation of watches, but the April weather set a limit on their trysts. When possible, after rainy delays, they made their way to the hollow at Old Two. Each time they tied the ponies to the log beside Old Two and walked with arms about each other to the pond. Skane's wooing was no pretence. He was genuinely mad about her. He lived for these moments when, miles from the station, they could throw their masks aside and slip into Elysium.

For her part Isabel sought in his passionate avowals a fleeting comfort against the pangs of doubt. The feeling of impending crisis that had come upon her with the winter dark was not changed by the discovery that Skane was violently in love with her. At first she had thought it was the answer to everything; but the fears were only subdued, the mystery was still there, brooding over all four of them, and the new light of Skane's passion made the old shadow more sombre still.

The sun was always well down when she dismounted outside the apartment door. Once Matthew said to her mildly, "You shouldn't ride so far, my dear."

"Do you mind?" she said quickly with a sidelong glance.

"Oh, no, but you seem a bit tuckered sometimes."

She paused in the doorway and looked back, regarding him more carefully. Did he suspect? There was nothing of suspicion in his calm face, contemplating her with a faint smile on the lips. There was only a friendly solicitude and the touch of profound melancholy that had crept into his features during the past four or five months. She was reassured.

MARINA had now come alive. The common seals which lived about the island all through the year had moved into the lagoon, and on sunny afternoons they could be seen lazing on the warm sands of the south bar. A number of big hooded seals had drifted to Marina with the great ice-pack, and hung about the island fishing in the surf. These, too, came ashore to sleep in the sun, and when disturbed by a passing rider they

scrambled with swift ungainly movements into the water, digging their fore flippers into the sand and drawing their sleek hinder parts under them for each forward flop.

But the great change was the return of the birds. Carney knew them all. They filled him with delight.

"Hark!" he would say with sudden enthusiasm. "Do you hear that wee chap in the grass behind the shed? That's a variety of the Savannah Sparrow. And do you know, Marina's the only nesting place of that variety known to man? Makes you realize how old this heap of sand must be."

His pleasure in the return of the birds and of the broad strong sunshine seemed to lift some of the melancholy from his spirits. One warm April day he even consented to ride with Isabel and Sargent along the shore of the lagoon towards Number Three. As they reached the crest of a long ridge they came upon a little comedy in a group of wild ponies grazing in the shallow green valley beyond. Carney reined up to point them out.

"See the stallion—that's the big dark chap with the very long mane. I can't see him clearly from here—the dazzle on the sand—but I'll venture his flanks are well scarred where he's been fighting for his mares."

"What happens to the stallion colts?" asked Sargent, peering under the shade of his hand.

"He kicks 'em out when they come of age, and they wander off along the island looking for a mate. Like that one—see that lone pony in the ravine just below us? There's a rogue stallion from some other herd. Watch him now. See how that little mare has wandered away from the rest—down there. In a few more nibbles she'll be out of the old boy's sight. See? Now watch the young stallion—see him working along the ravine. Now! Now he's slipping up close to her—see? See how he's nudging her—shoving her the way he wants her to go. There! Now they're off together along the ravine. By the time the old chap misses her they'll be a mile away and out of sight."

"She seemed to be quite willing," Isabel observed.

"Oh, yes."

"Rather like people, aren't they?" Sargent said, and laughed. Isabel flushed.

"Shall we go on?" she said. The comedy was closed; but all the way

back to the station that casual phrase of Sargent's echoed in her mind.

At the next tryst she was uneasy. When Skane tethered the ponies beside Old Two she asked, "Are you sure it's safe to leave them here? Mightn't they be seen from the north beach?"

Skane shook his head vigorously. "I've tested it, my dear. You can't see the spot where we tether the ponies at all."

She walked on. There was always something delicious in the sensation of crossing over the dune and coming upon the hidden pond. But on this day as they dropped upon the turf Isabel said, "Sometimes I have a feeling we're being watched."

"You're a bit queer today," Skane said. "What's the matter?"

"Give me a cigarette, please. I want to talk. Greg, we can't go on like this—I can't, anyway. It's different for you. But I'm still living with Matthew. Of course, there hasn't been anything intimate between us for a long time. Otherwise it would have been horrible."

"Yes."

"You must know how I feel, Greg. If I hated Matthew, if he were cruel, it would be different. But he isn't. He's everything a husband ought to be—except that he's become so utterly distant since the winter began. He seems to be miles away. I can't help feeling that soon after the autumn he began to regret the step he'd taken—me, I mean. I've asked him about it, but he always puts me off and says that nothing's changed. Well, I know better. Everything's changed. You know how he's given up his walks, his shooting, everything he used to love. His whole life's spoiled. And I know why. It's on account of me."

Skane broke in angrily, "I wish you wouldn't talk like that, Isabel. Crying over spilt milk never did anybody any good. The only important thing is that you love me now and I love you. You're everything to me." He attempted to put his arm about her but she leaned away.

"I believe you, Greg. But the fact remains that this situation isn't fair to Matthew or to you, and it's not fair to me."

"What do you propose to do about it?"

She plucked at the grass. "I can't leave Matthew, not while he's so kind to me. I feel it's got to come from him. He's got to tell me that it's all over between us. Meanwhile," she went on slowly, "it seems to me you should do something yourself. Greg, the boat is coming in a few days. I wish you'd go. Don't say no, please! If you'll only go away and

let me settle my thoughts a bit! Give me three or four months to sort myself out."

"And what then, Isabel?"

She faced him. "When I'm certain Matthew doesn't love me any more, that he wants nothing but his old life back again—then, Greg, I'll leave Marina and come to you." She hesitated a moment. "There's something else. I want you to go on leave, get the feel of civilized life again—and ask yourself in August if I still mean the same thing to you. I've got no illusions about myself, Greg. I'm not at all the sort of woman men go mad about when there are others to be had."

"That's where you're absolutely wrong," Skane said quickly. "You've got something very few women have. It can't be described. It isn't anything physical. I suppose a woman might have that quality and go all her life without knowing it unless some man made love to her and found her marvellous."

"Isn't that what every man tells a woman when he's making love?" she asked, with a sudden smile.

"I'm talking about what a man feels within himself," he answered impatiently, "and I know that here or anywhere I'd still feel the same about you. You spoke of doing the decent thing. The decent thing for both of us is to go to Carney together and face this out, now, before the *Elgin* comes."

He said this in a rapid eager tone. Isabel remained in her defensive attitude, half turned away and staring at the pool.

"I still say you should go—and I must wait," she answered stubbornly. "The other day something happened that made me realize we'd been playing a very old and rather sordid little drama, and it hurt me to think that the world has been laughing at it since time began. If we ran away together we wouldn't have to face it—but poor Matthew would. Please say you'll go, and let me stay till August."

Skane rose and caught her shoulders. He felt her trembling. "Look here, darling, tell me the truth. Are you sure your mind's not made up already? Are you trying to send me away on a vague promise that you know you won't keep, simply because you can't bear to hurt me now, or Carney in August?"

Isabel refused to meet his eyes, and as she turned her head away she saw a shadow falling down the slope. There was a sound, a scuffle of

sand, a rustle in the spire-grass on the crest of the hollow. They looked up, startled, and saw a pony poised on the rim above their heads and Sara Giswell in the saddle.

CHAPTER 22

THE GIRL and the pony made a picturesque statue seen thus from below. A brace of wild duck hung limp from the horn of the saddle. The reins were in her left hand and in the crook of her right elbow lay Giswell's old Mauser rifle. The dark eyes glittered in her brown young face. She sat erect, looking down upon them with a mixture of triumph and contempt.

"So this is the place! I wondered where it was, after I seen the ponies tied outside Old Two a fortnight back."

Skane cleared his throat. "Look, Sara, Mrs. Carney and I"

"Ho, yes! Miz Carney an' you! I knowed what you was up to, too, on'y I couldn't find the place."

The girl had a theatrical advantage, looking upon them from that height, and they felt curiously small.

Isabel's eyes met Sara's in a mutual instinctive hate. She cried, "How dare you talk to us like that!"

The girl threw back her head and laughed, showing a row of excellent white teeth.

"Ho, I dare all right! Too good for the likes of us, wasn't you? Wouldn't come down to see us people at Three, Four, nor East Light, would you? Ho, yes, very high an' partic'lar, wasn't you? But you wasn't partic'lar with your men! Your husband, he wasn't enough. It had to be all three, an' Greg Skane for special!"

Isabel uttered a gasp and swung away. "Come, Greg!"

"Wait!" Skane said in an odd voice. He had not moved. He was watching Sara with a most careful interest.

Sara laughed triumphantly. "She'll stay all right. She'll listen, too. If she don't, Carney will, an' so will everyone from East Light down to West." She glared at Isabel. "I knowed there was somethin' queer about you from the day you come to Marina. I said you looked like a witch. Ho, yes! Carney never looked at a woman till you met him ashore somewheres an' put a spell on him. You've had 'em all under your fingers, all



winter, shut up in the station with you, makin' 'em do what you liked."

Sara was working herself up to a fury. Already she was shaking and panting with the stress of it. Isabel stood in a cold rage under the rain of words that fell from Sara's lips, listening to oaths and obscenities that the girl must have heard from the young lifeboatmen. And in the midst of this she became aware that Skane was moving slowly up the slope, never taking his eyes from Sara's face, and calling to her softly whenever she paused for breath. "Sara! Sara!" He had exactly the air of a man who approaches a restive horse with a halter clutched behind his back. Isabel saw that the rifle no longer lay in the crook of Sara's arm. It was thrown across the saddle, with one brown hand grasping the barrel and the other behind the bolt, and the muzzle pointed down towards the pool.

Isabel was not alarmed. She knew very little of fire-arms and it was obvious that Sara's rage had reached a point where she was unaware of the rifle and only vaguely aware of Skane. The girl rose in the stirrups as if from this added height she could add force to the stream of vituperation. Suddenly she paused. Without shifting that hateful gaze from Isabel she said hoarsely, "Don't come no farther, Greg Skane. I know what you're thinkin' an' it ain't a-goin' to do you no good, nor her."

"Sara, don't be a little fool," Skane said, and began to run.

"Stay where you are!" the girl screamed. The pony reared.

The shot made a shocking sound in the hollow and it was followed by a shocking silence. Isabel felt a violent blow as if an invisible fist had struck her side. It staggered her for a moment but she recovered and turned her eyes slowly from Skane to the girl, and to the old seal rifle falling from Sara's hands and slithering down the slope. She heard her own voice demanding in an amazed tone, "Why are you looking at me like that?"

"My God!" Skane said, and came towards her. Sara was sitting crouched on the pony, her hands over her face. Isabel looked down then and saw red drops falling like dye from the edge of her scarlet jacket and splashing on her right boot and the sand. A wave of giddiness passed through her but she remained fully conscious, and she was saying in a bewildered voice, "I must sit down," when Skane caught her falling to the turf.

She lay very still while Skane wrenched open her clothes. The bullet had entered the right side near the lowermost rib and passed through

her waist at a steep angle, emerging just above the flank. He tore her dress in ragged strips, and as he tried to stop the gush of blood with hasty wads and bandages, he saw Sara slide from the pony's back and come slowly down to the pool. She stopped some distance away from the prone form on the grass. The storm had gone from her face and there was now a naïve and frightened curiosity.

"Is she dead?"

"No, but she's badly hurt. Go and bring our ponies here."

"I didn't do it," she whimpered, like a child whose ball has broken a window. "It was your fault, jumpin' at the pony's head. The gun went off."

"You had your finger on the trigger, hadn't you?"

Isabel was still conscious when Skane lifted her into the saddle. She uttered a gasp of agony and Skane gritted his teeth. He adjusted the pads and bandages.

"Come here and steady her while I get on my pony." Sara came reluctantly. Her mouth was drawn in a child's grimace and the tears streamed. She watched Skane's grim face and cried out a babble of questions and entreaties that he did not trouble to answer.

"She ain't a-goin' to die, is she? 'Twasn't my fault. I didn't mean to hurt her. Please, Greg, don't say it was me. I loved you so an' I couldn't bear to see you with her. Is she hurt bad?"

Skane rode in close to Isabel's pony and put his arm across her shoulders.

"Now give me those reins."

Sara put them in his left hand, looking up in his face.

"Can't I do something to help you?" she cried.

"Yes," he said savagely, "get out of my sight!"

He rode off slowly, heading across the island towards the lagoon. It was awkward to keep the ponies together and hold Isabel as well. Several times he had to stop and adjust the bandages, and each time he was appalled by the amount of blood that soaked them. Isabel sat dazed and wordless, clinging gallantly to her senses.

The sun was far down towards the sea. When the wireless station came in sight Isabel's head began to loll.

"Just a bit more," Skane begged. "Only a little way now."

When they turned off the lagoon shore and came up towards the

station Carney and Sargent were outside, rolling a drum of petrol to the intake pipe of the engine-room. They did not notice the approach of the ponies for some time. Then Sargent exclaimed. Carney began to run first. He came in swift strides over the sand, shouting "My God, what's happened, Skane?" The sunset gave a coppery glint to his beard and hair. Skane did not reply at once but as they drew together he said in a flat voice, "She's been shot."

In a profound silence they drew the ponies to the door and carried Isabel to the bedroom.

Carney turned to Sargent. "Get back to your watch," he said. "Phone McBain and tell him what's happened. Then crack off a message to the Department office at Halifax. Say my wife's been seriously injured and the *Elgin* must come at once. Mark it 'D' for urgent, and sign my name. Then see if you can raise the *Elgin*. She's up the coast somewhere."

Isabel swam in a dark sea, rising and falling with the waves. She did not feel pain so much as exhaustion and a vast dull protest in her flesh. Once she heard very plainly the click of the tin cover of the first-aid kit. And once, in reply to Carney, she heard Skane saying, "Some fool with a rifle, I suppose, potting at ducks."

These interludes were brief. Most of the time she floated in darkness with the sound of a great surf in her ears. She did not hear the faint crunch of McBain's buggy wheels and she did not see Mrs. McBain come storming in, with a coat thrown over her apron and a moth-eaten Lily Langtry hat perched coquettishly on her grey head, crying, "Guns! Guns! Guns! Last year it was Jim Corrie with his arm blown half off, and the year before it was that Shelman child, playing with a .22. When are you going to learn, you dangerous idiots! Where's this poor girl?"

She took charge at once, drove Carney and Skane out of the apartment, shook up the fire in the stove, filled the kettle, and moved into the bedroom with her old carpet-bag.

For years she had been Marina's oracle in medical matters, a role that she sustained with homely remedies learned in her girlhood in a Nova Scotia fishing village.

For many hours Isabel lay unconscious, sometimes tossing in delirium, sometimes as still as if dead.

On the second day she swam back to full consciousness, and Mrs. McBain fetched Matthew. "My dear," she said, "here's your husband.

You mustn't try to talk to him. I don't know how far down the lung goes but the bullet may have touched it, though you seem to breathe all right. Say something to her, Matthew."

Isabel turned her eyes. There was pain now, intense pain, as if a red-hot iron had been thrust into her side and was being twisted without cease or mercy in the wound. She lay drenched in perspiration. She saw Matthew coming slowly to the bedside. He dropped upon his knees.

"My dear, if you only knew how I wish it had been me."

Her eyes filled but she managed to twist her lips in a smile.

He turned his gaze to the wall and said with an assumed briskness, "We're going to take you off to hospital at Halifax. The Department's sent a message ordering O'Dell here at once. Thank God the weather's fair and the glass keeps high."

Mrs. McBain saw Isabel close her eyes. "That'll be enough," she said at once. "Don't talk any more. You can sit there with her if you like."

Isabel could hear the coughing of the engine exhaust and presently the transmitter screamed. She knew Skane's hand at once. He was calling the *Lord Elgin* and she sensed in the long repeated signals the urgency of her lover. And in the long silence that followed she could see him bent towards the tuner panel with his lean fingers on the dials, straining to hear the hoarse burr that was for all of them the voice of The Boat. There seemed to be no answer and she drifted into sleep. When she awoke Matthew was gone, and Mrs. McBain was saying, "Ah! Now, lamb, before I touch those bandages try to eat a little soup."

CHAPTER 23

THE HOURS passed. She saw the next day's sunrise enter the window and brighten a strip of wall above the bed, and she watched it slowly move and fill the room.

Mrs. McBain came in and went at once to draw the blind, but Isabel protested.

"Don't pull it down, please. I love the sunshine. There hasn't been much in my life."

Mrs. McBain looked at her curiously.

"You mustn't speak if it hurts, lamb. You haven't been happy on Marina, have you?"

"Yes and no."

"Well, it's not much of a life for a young woman like you. Your voice sounds quite strong. You don't feel any bubbling inside or anything like that?"

"No."

"You look bad though, lamb. I suppose it's the shock and of course you lost an awful lot of blood. We're all praying for a calm sea, so McBain can get you off the beach all right. Carney's going off with you, I suppose?"

"Oh, no, he mustn't do that. He can't leave Skane and Sargent here to keep watch-and-watch all that time. He *must* stay, I won't hear of his leaving."

"Um. Well, I must go and get the men's dinner on. After dinner I'll brush your hair and fix you up nice and your husband can talk to you. Would you like to see Skane and Sargent for a minute? They've been terrible anxious over you."

"That would be nice."

Mrs. McBain was an exact woman. Skane and Sargent had no more than her minute, standing in the doorway murmuring a few commonplaces. Then Matthew came, with a light of relief on his haggard face.

"My dear, Halifax raised the *Elgin* five minutes ago. O'Dell's heading for Marina at ten knots—should be off Marina tomorrow morning. McBain's fixed up a wagon with a mattress on top of some loose hay. Tomorrow after breakfast we'll take you to the landing-place. You must tell Mrs. McBain what things to pack up for you. I'll get my own duds later on."

Isabel licked her dry lips. "Matthew, close the door. There's something I must tell you."

Carney rose and shut the door. He turned, drawing in a deep breath and squaring his shoulders. "Yes, my dear?"

"Matthew, I don't want you to come away with me."

"But I've made arrangements"

"That doesn't matter. You can't go off and leave two men to run the station for so long. Don't argue—please! I've had a lot of time to think, lying here. My mind's been so muddled ever since I came to Marina, but now it's very clear. I'm going to be all right. I don't think I'm dangerously hurt. The important thing, Matthew, is that this offers us a way

out of a nightmare. The winter did something to us. As if—as if we were both under a curse of some kind. It was like a darkness that you can sense but you can't feel. It seemed to shut us off from each other."

"Yes," he said. He was not looking at her. He sat hunched forward, contemplating his big clasped hands, and she saw that the knuckles were white.

"I realize now that I should never have come, Matthew. It wasn't your fault. It was mine—all mine. This accident is the best thing that could have happened, for us all. It leaves you all as you were before, when you had what you considered the finest kind of life. Marina is the only place that has any meaning for you. That's true, isn't it?"

He remained bowed and silent. Then in a strained voice, almost a whisper: "Yes."

"Then you'll promise to stay—and let me go?" Another silence; and again a hoarse "Yes." She saw a tear splash on the clenched hands, and her own eyes filled.

"Please leave me now," she said in a broken voice. "And tell Mrs. McBain that I want to be alone for a time."

She wept when he had gone; and in the morning, just before they came to take her away, she worked the wedding-ring off her finger and slipped it under the pillow. Matthew would find it when he returned from the beach, and would understand.

Next morning, they carried her on a stretcher to the wagon. It was Sargent's watch and she said good-bye to him there, with a pale smile, and saw him turning away to hide his emotion.

Mrs. McBain sat in the straw beside her and McBain took the reins himself, with Carney walking on one side of the wagon and Skane on the other, to ease the sway.

There was a light breeze and the air was cool and fresh. The surf hissed on the shore. The radio mast stood tall in the April sky, receding, sinking slowly into the dunes. Isabel watched it out of sight.

At the landing place the lifeboat crew was waiting with the station's best surfboat. The Kahns were there, and the Lermonts had ridden down from Number Two.

"Are you all right, lamb?" said Mrs. McBain solicitously.

"Yes."

"Here's your husband to kiss you good-bye."

Matthew's face appeared, bending over her. He looked very stern. His eyes were exactly the colour of the spring sky, so different from the dark-blue sea tint of Skane's, and she saw in them now the strange "radio look" that she had so often remarked in all of them, regarding things hidden and afar. There were no tears in them, as there were in hers. She felt the crisp hairs of the golden beard against her cheek and then a brief touch of his lips.

"I've written a letter to Hurd," he said. "He'll see that you have everything you want."

He paused, and swallowed, looking off to sea. "Good-bye, my dear, and God bless you. It's strange . . . that seems all there is to say." He turned away.

Mrs. McBain kissed her.

"Good-bye, lamb, and come back to us soon. Your suit-case and things are in the boat." And she added, "Don't cry, you mustn't cry," as if she were not weeping noisily herself.

Then Skane's face, gaunt and impersonal, but with an intimate message in his eyes.

She blinked the tears away and said in a small voice, "It's good-bye, Greg."

"We'll be seeing you," he said. She did not answer. In another moment McBain was saying, "All right, boys, shove off!" He stood in the boat clasping the loom of the big steering oar in his seasoned hands. The crew, with Kahn, Lermont, Skane, Carney and the three island women, put their hands on the gunwales and waded out into the surf, thrusting the boat to sea. Isabel, in the boat bottom, could see nothing now but McBain's alert brown face and the sea-birds wheeling in the cloudless sky.

The boat was waterborne now, dancing in the surf, and the crew jumped in and ran out the oars.

"Pull!" snapped McBain. "Lively now!" The rowers pulled violently. McBain looked down and gave Isabel a grin.

"Nothin' to it. Janie got us a good sea for her prayers."

Nevertheless, there was concern in his eyes as they drew alongside the ship and looked up the swaying iron cliff of her side. O'Dell had his forward derrick boom swung out and the cargo hook came down to the boat like a predatory claw.

McBain fastened the stretcher tackles. Then he called, "H'st away!"

Isabel heard O'Dell's high voice calling "Easy now!" to his donkeyman. For a time there was nothing in her view but the sky, the cargo hook and its wire, but as the boom swung slowly inboard the *Lord Elgin's* upper works came into sight, and the faces of O'Dell and his mate thrust over the canvas dodger on the bridge. The stretcher was lowered to the forward deck.

She looked up at O'Dell's face, pale and sardonic.

"Well, young woman, I s'pose you didn't know it was loaded?"

"No."

"They never do. We'll have you snug in a berth in a minute or two. Why didn't Carney come off with you?"

"I didn't want him to."

Captain O'Dell searched her eyes with his appraising stare, and found nothing but a challenge that defeated him. He shrugged and called seamen to carry the stretcher aft.

CHAPTER 24

THE HOSPITAL was full and busy. Hurd came once or twice to see her. He was rather stiff. It was plain that he had not forgiven Miss Jardine for running off. He had sent a wireless to Carney saying that the wound while serious was not dangerous and that she was recovering. He talked a lot about radio broadcasting, the new miracle, in which Isabel was only faintly interested. A visit from Miss Benson proved more entertaining. She came in wearing a chic spring ensemble including what must have been the shortest skirt in Halifax and what was known currently as a Chase-Me-Charlie hat. She put a bag of grapes on the bedside table, and sat on the chair crossing her greatest asset with a slither of taut silk.

"Well, Mrs. Carney, this isn't the way I expected to see you again. Shot, Mr. Hurd tells me, what an awful thing. But a bit of change never did anybody any harm. That lonely place, I mean, and having to do all the cooking. By the way, I've brought the cheque for your cooking wages. Four hundred dollars. It's funny. I can't imagine you cooking for three men. But then I can't imagine you there at all."

Isabel smiled.

"Marina and Halifax just aren't in the same world. How are you getting along?"

"Oh, very well. Fortunately Hurd's out quite a bit now, making speeches on 'The Immeasurable Future of Radio.' Everybody's going crazy about this new broadcasting fad. But the whole radio business is a bore if you ask me. As for this new fad, these broadcasting receiving sets, you sit hunched over a lot of valves and coils and batteries and things with a pair of phones jammed over your hair, listening to somebody talking down in a barrel in Schenectady, New York, and saying 'Double-you Gee Why' in a slow solemn voice as if it was God pronouncing judgment on a wicked world. You just can't see a future in that."

She rattled on for half an hour and then picked up her gloves and handbag, walked towards the door and turned. "You know, you look changed. If I was a man I'd say you looked interesting. That's not exactly the word I want but you know what I mean. Most of the married women I know just look married."

And away she went, a hat and a pair of legs, looking very unmarried indeed.

The days in bed were interminable. It was an immense relief when she was allowed to get up and on fine days to spend several hours in an arm-chair on the ground-floor veranda.

She was reading by the fire in the lounge on a rainy afternoon when one of the nurses put her head in the doorway and said cheerfully, "Mrs. Carney? There's such a nice-looking young man to see you. A sailor. Shall I send him in?"

Isabel started violently. For a moment she could not speak. She got out of the chair and stood facing the door with her fingertips biting into the palms.

"No . . . yes, send him in."

The nurse stepped back and beckoned to someone along the hall; and as he turned into the doorway Isabel breathed out a long sigh. It was Sargent.

"Jim!" she said shakily, and relaxed in the chair. "What on earth are you doing here?"

He was wearing the sea uniform he had kept so carefully on Marina, with its bright merchant-navy buttons and the entwined gold sleeve braid.

When she put out her hand he shook it in a gingerly way as if he were afraid she might fall to pieces at a single hearty touch.

"Well," he explained with a pleased look, "I got off Marina a fortnight ago. O'Dell was in quite a wax because he'd had to drop everything to take you off, and then turn round inside a month to make the regular trip out to Marina with supplies and mail. Anyhow my year was up and Hurd sent out a new chap to take my place. Three or four of the island people came off at the same time I did. One of 'em was Sara Giswell."

"Oh?"

"Ma Giswell's been trying to persuade her to go ashore and get some schooling for the past four years, but you know how potty Sara was about Skane. Well, apparently she's got over it at last. Going to live with Ma Giswell's people at Port Bickerton. When I left, Carney and Skane gave me letters for you, with strict instructions to put them in your own hands. Here they are."

He handed over the letters. Isabel put them in her lap without a glance but her hand shook.

"How are they—Matthew and Skane?"

"Oh, all right. We were all pretty blue after O'Dell took you off, and you can imagine the relief when we got Hurd's message saying everything was okay. It was pretty dull after that. Carney and Skane are both the silent sort, and I was just counting the days. When I got aboard the *Elgin* I dropped on my knees and kissed the deck. Phew! What a relief! Give me life at sea."

"And now you're off to sea?"

"Yes, tomorrow I pull out on a tanker for Talara, in Peru. Oil, you know. It's a bit quaint to be piping away with a half-kilowatt set again, after that roaring thing at Marina. But what a luxury to be able to throw a switch and let some bloke down in the engine-room worry about the juice!

"The only petrol engines I ever want to hear again are the kind they put in taxicabs."

His laugh was infectious and Isabel laughed with him. He chatted for another ten minutes and then went off with quick strides, with his cap cocked over one ear.

She opened Matthew's letter at once.

The envelope was addressed in his huge scrawl. "Mrs. Isabel Carney. Personal. Care J. Sargent, Esq."

The letter read:

My dear girl,

Sargent leaves tomorrow and I'm writing this in the night watch as it seems a good chance to get a letter off to you direct. We're getting along well, as Sargent will tell you.

I can't tell you how relieved we all were when we learned that you'd come through all right. Thank God for that.

Now, my dear, I want to tell you what I couldn't find words for the day you went away. I knew from the first that you could never be happy with me on Marina, for several reasons, some of which you know. In a fit of selfishness at Halifax I forgot them all, even the one that was sharpest in my mind. I suppose we were both a bit delirious in those days but I think we both realized our mistake soon after we came to the island. You tried to make the best of it and I shall always be grateful for the joy you gave me then. But by the time winter came I knew more than you what a frightful mistake it was.

All this seems a maundering sort of way to tell you what is on my mind. It's simply this. As you know, we were never married in the legal sense, and you are free to live your own life as you choose. Live it then, my dear, and try to forget this sorry episode. For my part the world is here. I shall never leave the island again. I have written a letter to the Bank of Nova Scotia in Hollis Street, making over to you the sum now lying to my credit there. It's something between eight and nine thousand dollars and will give you a good anchor to windward if you should ever be in need.

Try to think kindly of me. If I took advantage of your moment of weakness in Halifax it was because I was weak myself, catching at a kind of happiness that was new and wonderful to me. That I shall never forget. Good-bye my dear and God bless you and keep you always.

Yours sincerely,
Matthew Carney

The nurse came in.

"Why, Mrs. Carney, you're crying! Was it that young man? And he looked so nice!"

"I'm quite all right."

A searching stare. "You're as white as a ghost. I shouldn't have let him in. You go to bed."

"Oh, no, I'm quite well," Isabel protested.

But Nurse Thompson would hear no argument. To bed Isabel went, clutching her letters and her self-command in the same forlorn fists. When the doctor came in she pretended to be asleep.

It was three days before she permitted herself to open the letter from Skane. It was written on the blue back of a long press message form.

My Darling,

Sargent's off tomorrow and he's to put this in your hands himself. What wonderful news that you weren't dangerously hurt! We were all smiles for days. Everyone's been anxious about you from the Kahns right down east to Jude Shelman and his wife. Altogether it's been the greatest excitement on Marina since a schooner loaded with rum struck on the East Bar and all the islanders went down with d.t.'s for a month.

Seriously, though, we were all terribly worried and for me it was hell. It wasn't till we were making that ghastly journey back to the station that I really knew what you meant to me. I won't inflict it on you here. When spoken, love is so very fresh and original; but when written a lot of it looks damned silly. The moral is that you should speak of love but never write about it. Anyhow, I refuse to make love to you on paper, and this is chiefly to inform you that I've written to Hurd reminding him that I've been here nearly three years and that he must send a man to relieve me when O'Dell comes again in August. Then for a good long leave! Please keep Hurd informed of your whereabouts. When I get to Halifax I'll stop in the office long enough to pick up your address, and then, my very dear, I shall come to you with a D prefix, demanding absolute priority.

All my love, Greg

P.S.—Hurd will give me a transfer to almost any station I wish. There are some snug ones up the Gulf and on the Great Lakes. Or I could quit pounding brass and go in for something else, anywhere you like. What about the West Coast—Vancouver, say?

Isabel read it through several times. Then she walked over to the lounge fire-place, tore the sheet into small blue scraps and dropped them into the flames.

CHAPTER 25

On the Annapolis River, in the midst of the Nova Scotia apple country, lay the little village of Kingsbridge near which Isabel had been born. There, once she was released from the hospital, she fled—

leaving no forwarding address. She had not gone near Carney's bankers in Halifax. She had not even gone to see Hurd. All that was out of her life.

In the Kingsbridge bank she deposited three hundred dollars of her "cooking wages" from Marina and a seventy-dollar cheque, her last month's wages from Hurd, which she had never cashed; then she began to look for a job. Within a few days she found one with Jason Markham, a local hardware merchant and cannery operator who had known her family for many years. ("Those Jardines," he had said when he hired her. "Good stock. Scotch. Proud. Hard-working. Moody, though. All of 'em gone now. Sad.")

Isabel's bedroom, in a quiet lodging-house, faced upon an apple orchard. The trees were in full leaf and the buds were fat; in another week or two the whole valley would burst into blossom. The air was quiet; indeed, it was almost uncanny after the bustle of Halifax and the eternal crashing of Marina's surf. These are the things that matter, she told herself, all these lovely things I've missed so long. Nothing else. Nothing!

As spring slid into summer, Isabel plunged deep into her work. She had a good memory and a knack for figures and within a few months had grasped the hardware business in a way that drew even her cautious employer's praise.

Before long she was working two or three evenings a week to keep up with the increasing responsibilities he gave her.

Sometimes, on an afternoon off, she was conscious of a sense of waste, as she remembered that she had passed her thirtieth birthday. In this orchard country the similitude of women and apples came instinctively to mind. Some were best quite early in the season, others attained their ripeness later. But all of them were meant to be enjoyed in their time. After that they withered and were spoiled for ever: Gravensteins, Pippins, Golden Russets—and Isabel Jardines.

When on an occasional impulse she drew forth the photograph of Skane and Carney with the shipwrecked *Clélie,* it was only to face once more the enigma of her life on the island and put it away unsolved. In these hours of self-contemplation the future oppressed her. Was it merely that summer was passing, the warm and lovely time so like the best years of a woman's life? August was all but gone.

And then all self-examination perished in a single blinding thought. The end of August! With shaking fingers she caught up the Halifax newspaper and ran a swift glance down the Marine News column. And there it was:

"Arrived: *Lord Elgin,* O'Dell Master, Marina Island, passengers."

All the rest of the day, Isabel's thoughts ran furiously upon that scrap of news. "Passengers!" Among others, Gregory Skane. She could see him with that firm jaw and the hard blue challenge in his eyes, striding into Hurd's office and demanding the address of Mrs. Carney. She could see Miss Benson simpering and Hurd thrusting forth the glad hand he reserved for crack operators. And she could hear Hurd murmuring that Mrs. Carney had left without a forwarding address.

Skane would fume round Halifax for a day or two and then go off to Cape Breton to see his people and spend his leave. She told herself that he would find other women charming and quite willing to meet his wants.

But she would have no more of him. She had never loved him—never! —any more than Skane had really loved her. They had both given way to something that sprang out of the emptiness of winter in the lonely grey station, a hot quick spark that leaped and flamed. Now she was safe from that dangerous quality in him and herself. Nevertheless, for weeks she started whenever a quick new step came through the office or the phone rang for "Miss Jardine."

THE GREAT public event of autumn in Kingsbridge was the County Exhibition, at which everyone gathered for a week to gaze upon the champion livestock, fruits, vegetables and preserves of his own district. Exhibition Week reached its climax on Saturday night in a display of fireworks, and Isabel decided to walk down from her lodging-house to see them.

She was pulling a tam over her hair at the head of the lodging-house stairs when she heard her landlady, on her way out of the front door, pause and call back, "Man to see you, Miss Jardine." And then, looking down into the hall, she gasped.

Tossing his hat on to the hall rack, smiling up at her with his teeth very white in the dark face, stood Skane.

Isabel's knees felt weak. She put a hand on the rail.

"It's been years," Skane said.

She came down swiftly to the third step from the bottom and paused, a hand stretched back to the stair rail as if she were ready to fly at a touch.

"Well, Isabel?"

"Greg! How did you get here?"

"That's quite a story. Are we . . . er . . . is there anyone else about who might be interested?"

"I'm alone, if that's what you mean," Isabel said reluctantly. "Everyone's gone to the fair."

"Then suppose we sit down."

"Very well," she replied, and led the way to the parlour. "Will you sit there?"

She indicated a chair, and took another well removed. Skane sat, stretching out his long legs. He wore a curious smile and his eyes had a look she remembered too well for the dignified calm she so desperately wanted now.

"Perhaps you'll tell me, darling, why I had to look so long for you. When I arrived in Halifax Hurd said you'd disappeared from the hospital without a trace. I spent nearly a week asking for you at the hotels and boarding-houses, but I drew a blank. So I shoved off for Cape Breton to visit my father.

"I'd told Hurd I wasn't going back to Marina, and he'd offered to get me a station up the Gulf. But the more I thought of it, the less I liked it. There's a lot of sense in Hurd's raving about the future of radio. So I went to Montreal and hunted up a fellow I used to know, a former op who's left the sea and set up an electrical business. He's got two men putting together radio sets from his own design—and they are selling like hot cakes.

"I've stopped pounding brass now, Isabel, and have gone into the radio business."

During this recital, Isabel sat erect and tense, gripping the chair arms, the picture of a woman surprised and cornered. The old revealing flush was on her face and it seemed to envelop her whole flesh; she had a dismaying sense of defeat from within and of Skane's complete awareness of the fact, and between them, all but visible, hung those passionate memories of Marina.

She stirred. "But—none of this explains how you found me."

"Elementary, my dear, elementary. When I went back to Halifax this week to submit my resignation to Hurd, I had a sudden inspiration. Miss Benson looked through the cancelled cheques in her files for me—and there was one for seventy dollars, stamped by the bank branch in Kingsbridge. I caught the next train."

He laughed. In the downcast glow of the lamp his teeth gleamed in his dark face.

Isabel broke her rigid pose, walked to the fire-place, and rested one hand on the mantel. "I wish you didn't sound so . . . satisfied," she said resentfully.

Skane rose from the pool of yellow light and joined her, leaning against the fire-place, one hand stretched along the mantel, almost but not quite touching hers.

Isabel, staring at the hearth, did not miss the delicacy of the inch between their fingertips.

"You're very sure, aren't you?" she added in the same tone.

"No," he replied quickly. "I wish I were. You're a strange creature, Isabel. Do you know what you really want, yourself?"

She did not reply. She remained absorbed in her study of the hearth, and there was a certain melancholy in her drooping pose.

"Tell me about Marina—about Matthew," she said.

"What is there to tell?"

"Did he know about—about us?"

"Who can say? Matthew's not a suspicious sort of man. In any case, he said nothing."

He lit a cigarette. "Incidentally, I don't think Matt realizes how the world has changed," he went on. "Radio traffic's falling off at a great rate. The big liners are all fitted with continuous-wave sets now, and they buzz their stuff straight to New York. Even the tramps can raise the mainland direct. The old system on Marina is obsolete."

"What do you think will happen?"

"Hurd told me that within a year Marina will cease handling commercial traffic altogether. The station there will be used merely for communication between the island and the mainland. The staff will be cut to one man—Matt himself. What's more, the lifesaving stations are due for a cut, too, now wrecks are so few. See what it means? It was lonely before. What will it be in a few more years?"

She considered his question gravely.

"I wish you hadn't come," she said finally in a disturbed tone. "You bring back everything I wanted to forget. For a month or so on Marina Matthew and I were happy together. I found that I really loved him and I was utterly content. And then he began to draw away from me, in little ways, in the trifles that mean everything. I couldn't understand—I couldn't believe it. There was no explanation except that he wanted his old life back. There was no quarrel, you understand? We simply drifted into a mental state as dreary as those long Marina nights. We were haunted. It seemed to affect us all. Surely you felt it?"

"Yes."

"Then what was it? That mystery! You must know."

Instinctively, Skane drew back a little.

"Mystery?" he repeated. Then in a more assured tone: "Well, the mystery was simply that all of us were in love with you, in various degrees. That was what you felt. How could you help it? It set us all apart from one another, each nursing his own emotions and wondering what the end was to be."

"But you were the only one really in love with me, Greg. Why should that distress me so?"

Skane tossed his cigarette into a vase. Isabel felt his arms slipped round her waist from behind, his lips against her ear. "Look here, darling, when you think of Marina think of those very sweet afternoons we had together, those rides when we put the Station behind us and could be ourselves, in love. Surely you can't forget all that?"

"No."

"Then come to Montreal with me. Let me take care of you, amuse you, make love to you."

He tightened his grasp and kissed her cheek. Isabel turned her face away, but her heart was a small quick drum beating the retreat. She felt the old insidious languor, the familiar urge to have done with thinking and give in. Skane really loved her, he had come all this way to find her, why deny him any longer?

"I suppose that means you want to marry me?"

"Of course, as soon as you're free. Carney will give you a divorce all right. We'll get a lawyer in Halifax to draw up the necessary papers and send them to Marina for him to sign."

"Greg," she said carefully, "suppose I told you that Matthew and I weren't married?"

He looked up at her sharply. "You don't mean it!"

"I do. We got a licence and a wedding-ring, but we discovered that you have to wait three days—and we had to catch the boat. So we dashed off just as we were, without benefit of clergy or even a Justice of the Peace."

"Well, I'm damned! Why didn't you tell me that before?"

"Does it make any difference?" Isabel said bluntly.

"No—not at all." He was still amazed. Then his jaw tightened. He faced her with the old hot, blue blaze in his eyes.

"Nothing matters except that I'm mad about you and I've got to have you. One woman in a thousand has what you've got and none of the rest are worth a damn."

With this rush of words he had brought his emotions to a sudden pitch. He regarded Isabel with an almost arrogant impatience.

"And Matthew?" she asked deliberately. "Surely Matthew found that quality in me, whatever it is? You must remember that for a time we were very much in love. I was the first woman in his life. Do you think he can forget so easily?"

"Matthew?" Skane snapped. "For God's sake, put Carney out of your mind, Isabel. Carney hadn't an earthly right to you. He deliberately swindled you. He was going blind and he damn well knew it."

CHAPTER 26

ISABEL said in a small voice, "Please say that again—that last."

"He's going blind," Skane repeated contemptuously. "He made me promise not to tell anybody, but there it is. He noticed it first the spring before he went to the mainland. One graveyard watch, suddenly, he couldn't see. Everything went green. Then his sight cleared again, but he found when he walked the beach at night, things weren't as distinct as they had been. He decided to go ashore on the spring boat and see an oculist.

"The Halifax oculist told him in a year or two at the outside he'd be stone blind and that nothing could be done about it. He saw oculists in Montreal, then in Toronto, and always the same story. Seems he caught

malignant ophthalmia on a West Indies voyage years ago. Eventually he recovered, and he didn't give it another thought. But apparently after all this time some sort of optical atrophy had caught up with him.

"It was like a sentence of death. Carney refused to believe it. So he came back to Marina—with you. It was summer then, and the light was strong. But he found he couldn't walk the beaches at night any more. That's why he objected when you insisted on walking back from Main Station in the dark. He got away with that all right. You didn't notice. But it's a wonder you didn't notice how clumsy he was in the evening before the lamps were lit. And the way he gave up duck-shooting and had to use a magnifying-glass to read. I'll say this for him—he put up a wonderful bluff.

"By November, he had to face the truth. He knew that the oculists were right—he knew the worst. And he was very upset, especially about you. He told me everything. He felt he'd swindled you—which was the truth—and that soon you'd be tied hopelessly to a man as blind as a bat."

"What's going to happen next year when the staff is cut?" Isabel asked.

"Oh, Matt will bluff it out as long as he can. The end will come when he can't even see to write the fifteen-minute log entries. Then the authorities will catch on, and he'll have to give up."

"And what then?"

Skane shrugged. "The little shack he's always mentioned in the dunes, I suppose, or a room at McBain's. The island people will look after him all right. Marina's his home."

Skane lit another cigarette. It had gone against his principles to play that forbidden trump, but she had to know the truth sooner or later. After all, she wasn't the first woman who had lost her head over a man and found herself cheated.

He looked up to find Isabel facing him, her slender brown fists gripped at her sides, a bitter anger in her eyes.

"So that was it!" she exclaimed. "That was the mystery! What a fool I was not to have seen! I even noticed the strangeness of his eyes, but I thought it was the faraway look you all had at times. He was going blind. Blind! Oh, you coward—you utter coward! Why didn't you tell me?"

She was shaking. Skane put out his hands in a futile gesture. "My

dear girl, he swore us to silence. Carney himself should have told you, but he wouldn't face it."

Isabel was weeping now, but Skane was stunned to see the look that had replaced the anger on her face. It was one of happiness, an almost delirious happiness that shocked him. She cried, "You're wrong! He did face it! He concealed his blindness because he didn't want to hurt me. Don't you understand? He loved me—he loved me all the time! He forced himself to draw away from me, to let me think he'd grown sick of me in those dreary winter months. For my sake he was willing to part with the only joy he's ever had."

Skane regarded her carefully. A bit of hysteria seemed natural at the full knowledge of Carney's misfortune but he could not understand the look of delight that transfigured her.

"After all," he said reasonably, "there's nothing you can do about it. You've got your own life to live."

"I'm going back to Marina."

He started violently. "My God, Isabel, pull yourself together. You don't mean you'd chuck everything that is good in life to go back to that barren heap and be a—a lamp for Carney?"

She threw back her head and smiled. "Yes—yes, that's it. A lamp for Carney! All my life I've wanted—I've craved to have someone need me absolutely and completely. To feel that I was doing something that mattered, that my life had a purpose. And not to feel lonely any more. Those are the things I've really wanted. I never saw them clearly until now. And now they're waiting for me on Marina, in spite of all my folly and stupidity!"

In her clear grey eyes Skane perceived a deep and shining happiness that he had never seen before. It nettled him.

"Tell me," he said. "If I hadn't solved the riddle of Carney for you, would it have made a difference?"

She gave him her hand and a brilliant smile. "Good-bye, Greg. I shall always be grateful."

"Would it?" he repeated, with her hand in his grasp. She drew it free with a firm little tug. Her lips twitched. A mysterious expression played over them.

"That, Greg," she said, "is a riddle that you'll have to solve for yourself."

CHAPTER 27

THERE was more time for her shopping in Halifax than on that other frantic occasion and it was just as well, for there were many things to buy.

Apart from her own winter needs there were things for Matthew, carefully chosen in the men's-wear shops. And there was a pair of expensive brier pipes to be hidden until Christmas, together with his favourite tobacco; and cigarettes for the other operators and various little gifts for the McBains, the Kahns and the Lermonts. She also went to an optician and bought a powerful reading-glass.

Her last errand took her to the Government Education Office. A man with smoothly brushed silver hair and shrewd brown eyes sat behind a desk and listened gravely to her account of life on Marina. The brisk nautical talk, he noted to himself, fell from her lips with fluent ease. She did not look or talk the least bit like a former schoolma'am.

"What are the people like?" he asked when she paused.

She thought before replying. "The lifeboat crew are all sorts, mostly single men, or men without women anyhow. They come and go. The others are the real islanders, most of them born there. They're very superstitious, but they're good people, they do their duty faithfully. They're housed and supplied with food and fuel—none of the ordinary worries of existence. It satisfies them. The older people are settled in their ways and nothing can be done about it. But the children ought to have a chance."

He tapped a pencil on the desk. "What you propose, as I understand it, is to hold classes for the children on certain days of the week, from April to November—the fine months of the year. How could the youngsters get there? You say the stations are scattered and the island is twenty-odd miles long."

"On pony-back. It will be a long ride for those from the east end. But in case of a sudden storm they could stay overnight with us or at Main Station."

"Any children of your own?"

"None—yet."

"I see. Of course you understand this is very unusual. You say you

can't guarantee to hold school more than two or three times a week, and none at all in the winter months. I'm afraid the Board wouldn't approve paying a teacher on that basis."

"Oh, I don't want pay!" she exclaimed. "All I want is a set of school-books, pencils, scribbling paper—all that kind of thing—for about a dozen youngsters."

"I see." There was a friendly gleam in the eyes behind the desk. "Well, we can do that all right. I'll see that the stuff is sent down to the ship in time for sailing."

He rose and put out his hand. "May I say that this is not only an unusual but a very heart-warming experience. It's splendid!"

Isabel flushed.

"There will be times," she explained, "when like everybody else on Marina I shall need something else to do."

She walked out with her own words ringing in her ears on a gentle note of mockery. That awful phrase!

The *Lord Elgin* cast off her lines and drew away from the Halifax wharf on a grey November afternoon, in a drizzle of cold rain. Captain O'Dell invited Isabel to the bridge to watch the departure, and she stood in the starboard wing as the long water-front slid past. At her request, Matthew had not been notified that she was coming; her arrival was to be a complete surprise.

"How do you like that starboard cabin?" said O'Dell. "Sorry an inspector of lighthouses is in the one you had before."

Isabel laughed.

"I wouldn't want it for anything. The memories are too powerful. I hope to behave better this time."

"You keep your chin up and you'll be all right. Are you happy to be going back?"

"Very."

"Well, you keep clear of guns after this. That was a nasty accident you had. I hear Carney's given up duck-shooting. He getting squeamish about his feathered friends?"

"He has a squeamish wife," Isabel said calmly. "I'm starting a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Ponies, too."

"Good! Can't you do something about the Prevention of Going to Sea for poor old chaps like me?"

AFTER dinner, in the saloon, O'Dell drew her aside to sit on the settee. The port-hole curtains swayed gently and the glasses on the sideboard clicked together in their fiddle-holes. O'Dell studied the grey wisp from his cigar.

"Something I want to speak to you about," he said. "About Carney. It's always seemed to me that Carney measured closer to God's standard of a man than anyone else I knew. But lately, there's been something about him I couldn't fathom."

"Yes?" Isabel kept her gaze on the sideboard.

"I've a notion that something went adrift between Carney and you. None of my business. However, there's something else. Last spring and last August, Carney didn't come off to the ship in one of the surfboats as he always used to do. That was strange. And when I went on the beach in August, he didn't seem to want to talk. Only when we were about to shove off, he said in a dull sort of way, 'There was no other passenger?' I said, 'No.' Then he said, 'Was there any personal mail for me?' 'No.' He turned away, and then I noticed a small gold ring on a cord about his neck. Never saw it there before." O'Dell drew on his cigar.

"Now, another thing set me wondering. The third mate had gone ashore with me that morning. We were both in uniform, but we're not a bit alike. Yet when I sung out to Carney, he started to talk to the third mate. Wasn't till we were within ten feet of him that he suddenly turned his eyes to me. Then he pretended he'd been talking to me all the time. Afterwards in my berth aboard ship these things rang a little bell in my mind. Do they ring anything in yours?"

Isabel met his eyes squarely, so alive in that cynical face.

"Yes. You mean Matthew's losing his sight. He'll be blind in another year."

"So you knew!"

"I know now. He concealed it from me last spring."

"Ah!" said O'Dell. "That explains a good deal. When I thought you weren't coming back, and when I realized Carney was losing his sight, I got a double shock. For I remembered something he'd told me long before.

"You know what a reader he was. Well, one trip I found him deep in Norse mythology. You know, he looks like a Viking: not just that he's

big and blond, but his manner—the way he carries himself, like a sea-king. I used to kid him about it.

"One day, on the beach, just before he went to the eye doctors, he got to talking about the old Norse beliefs. Told me about Ran, the old sea-goddess. She had caves at the bottom of the ocean, a sort of Fiddler's Green where drowned sailors were entertained and each found a nymph waiting for him in the image of the woman he had most desired on earth. But it seems that the Lady Ran was a mercenary creature. No sailor could get in unless he had a bit of real gold to pay his way. That's why the old Norse rovers wore a gold bracelet or a ring or something whenever they shoved off to sea. A kind of life-hereafter insurance.

"Carney told me all this, and we both laughed. And then he said, quite seriously: 'Nonsense, of course, but the idea's splendid. When the fight was lost, when there was no hope left—a man could let himself sink and feel that all would be well.' And he threw that big right arm of his out towards the breakers on the outer shoals, where he often used to swim in the old days."

Isabel was staring at him with eyes that seemed enormous. "What do you mean?"

"I'm just trying to explain," O'Dell said quietly, "that when you came up the gangway this morning, my dear, you were the finest sight in the world."

SHE WAS awake long before daylight. When the *Lord Elgin* rounded the west bar, she appeared at breakfast with a tranquil face. Afterwards, watching the hatches taken off, the boats arriving alongside, the cargo booms sweeping back and forth, the flicker of white surf on the distant shore, she seemed to the glances of the crew no more than a composed wife returning from a holiday on the main. The heavy stores went first, the drums of petrol and paraffin and lubricating oil, the coal sewn up in hundred-pound bags for ready handling in the boats, the deceptive little cylinders containing mercury that looked so insignificant and weighed so mightily, the bales of pressed hay, the barrels of food, the bags of salt, the machinery parts.

It was well on towards noon when she said good-bye to the officers and went down the Jacob's ladder to the boat.

O'Dell came with her.

The captain, awaiting this moment, had delayed his customary state visit to the shore.

"When we run in, you'd better let one of the boatmen carry you out of the surf."

"I shall be all right."

"You should have worn boots and trousers," he said severely.

The steersman watched his chance. He chose the crest of a long green swell and cried to his oarsmen fiercely. The boat rode in. There was a rush of island figures about the boat. O'Dell turned swiftly to the steersman, commanding him to lift Mrs. Carney to dry footing. But before the words were out of his mouth Isabel stepped upon the thwart and poised a foot on the gunwale.

In another moment she was in the water to her knees and wading swiftly to the shore.

The brown men on the beach stared at the slender figure coming out of the sea with a wet dress clinging to her legs.

Carney stood at the beachhead by the pile of stores, where the little group of island women had gathered after their custom. Like most of the island men he had stripped to trousers and sea-boots for the work and his skin gleamed like new bronze after the summer's exposure. Beside the figures of the women he seemed to tower, a sculptor's study posed before the lesser figures of a symbolic group. From the girl running up the beach came a single cry.

"Matthew!"

O'Dell saw Carney start, and throw up a hand to shield his eyes from the water's glare. And in that attitude, with the clipped golden beard and hair gleaming in the sun, he looked—yes, by Jove, he looked like one of those Norse kings. You sought for the winged helmet and the long war axe and saw nothing but the bit of gold, Ran's tribute, slung by the cord upon his breast.

He gazed blankly towards the swiftly approaching figure of the woman.

When she was almost up to him suddenly the frown dissolved and became a look of wonder, of incredulous delight. Then she was sobbing against his breast, held in those great bronze arms as if he feared the sea might take her back again.

"A fathom's length he can see," muttered Captain O'Dell, "and not

another inch," as if it were a matter of great moment, something that ought to be marked on the chart. "And noon—full light."

He turned away, swallowing. He was a man who abhorred emotion and he summoned all his cynicism for a final judgment on this affair. Women! What strange creatures! Who knew what lay at the bottom of their secret hearts?

Isabel Carney was not what you'd call pretty but she was rather nicely made. She had the ripe attractiveness which comes to slender women in their early thirties; she was at her best, you might say, and she knew it. And could she fail to know, this intelligent young woman, that in the days to come when Carney could see her no more he would go on thinking of her as he saw her now? Could she fail to realize that for Carney she would always be young, her skin always fair, her eyes that clear grey, her figure that of a nymph running out of the sea? By Jove, what woman wouldn't chuck up the world for love in a desert on terms like that?

And having satisfied himself with this pronouncement Captain O'Dell startled the gaping boatmen with a shout.

"Look alive, there! D'ye think I've got all winter to drag my hook off this beach?"



Thomas H. Raddall

THOMAS H. RADDALL, one of Canada's foremost authors, was born at the famous School of Musketry at Hythe in Kent, where his father was a British Lieutenant-Colonel. Soon after, the family moved to Nova Scotia where, like his hero Matthew Carney, young Raddall spent an adventurous youth. Following his father's death in action in the First World War, he went to sea at the age of fifteen and served as a wireless operator on naval transports in the North Atlantic. He put in a few more years as a radio operator in the coastal service, worked in a wood-pulp mill, and then, still foot-loose, covered the entire forest area of Nova Scotia on foot and by canoe.

These adventures bore fruit when he began to write short stories for *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1928. They were an immediate success and brought rare letters of praise from Rudyard Kipling and John Buchan, who spoke glowingly of Raddall's "swift, spare narrative" and the "great stories" he had to tell. After a long series of short stories, many published in leading magazines, Raddall brought out during the '40's three historical novels and a history of Halifax. He has twice been awarded the coveted Governor-General's Award, Canada's highest literary honour.

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